

BARRE GAZETTE

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Santa Parade brings Christmas cheer



One of the floats in the Santa Parade held on Dec. 12 in the center of town.



A Santa inflatable complete with camouflage on Vibram Inc.'s lawn.



Volunteers made sure children in the cars got goodie bags from Santa.

NORTH BROOKFIELD – As Christmas approaches, residents were not going to let the annual Santa Parade fall to the wayside. They organized and planned and held a drive-by parade, with floats and Santa, complete with goodie bags for children.

Santa needed to be seen at a distance, but he was there waving with carolers and others dressed for the event.

The event was moved from its original date of Dec. 5 to Dec. 12 due to inclement weather. The rain came anyway, but the event forward and folks had fun anyway.

Turley Publications staff photos by
Sloane Perron



Vibram Inc.'s lawn was decorated with a number of inflatables for the Santa Parade held on Dec. 12.

Man indicted for Barre murder

BARRE — A Worcester County Grand Jury has indicted a 71-year-old Barre man on multiple charges in the Sept. 4 shooting death of his landlord, according to Worcester County District Attorney Joseph D. Early Jr.

Robert Leger of 113 Town Farm Road is charged with murder; possession of a firearm without an FID card; possession of a firearm with a defaced serial number; failure to secure a firearm; possession of ammunition without an FID card; and possession of a rifle or shotgun without an FID card. The indictments were handed up Friday.

Leger will be arraigned in Worcester Superior Court at a later date. He remains in custody without access to bail.

Barre Police, responding to a 911 call from 113 Town Farm Road on Sept. 4, discovered a man on the ground with multiple gunshot wounds. The man, Michael J. Hannon, 65, of the same address, was pronounced dead at the scene.

Mr. Leger was charged with murder and arraigned that same day in East Brookfield District Court. With the indictments, the case moves to Superior Court. The case is being investigated by the State Police Detectives assigned to the Worcester County District Attorney's Office and Barre Police.

EQLT to host Jan. 1 walk/ski

HARDWICK – East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT), 120 Ridge Road, will host a New Year's Day, Friday, Jan. 1, walk/ski on the Rail Trail beginning at noon. They will meet at the Rail Trail, located at 1700 Hardwick Road, in New Braintree at noon. Masks and social distancing required. Leashed dogs are welcome. The event will be held rain or shine unless there's a blizzard. People should RSVP to EQLT at EQLT@comcast.net or 413-477-8229.

Professor provides a virus overview

By Eileen Kennedy
Staff writer

WARE – The Quaboag Hills Community Coalition hosted Molly Gray, president and chief administrative officer for Baystate Health Eastern Region, and Megan W. Harvey, a Springfield College professor to provide perspectives on COVID-19 during a Zoom call Monday.

Gray said Baystate's seven-day positivity rate was 8.1%, which is about the highest the health-care company has seen. "But it's consistent with what's happening across the state," she said.

She said there were 158 of COVID-19 cases within Baystate's hospitals as of Monday, Dec. 21.

The big news she had to share was 2,127 employees just got their first dose of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine. "This could be a turning point," Gray said. Since Pfizer and Moderna vaccines differ somewhat although each needs two doses several weeks apart, she emphasized it is important to stay with the same manufacturer for the second shot.

As of that morning, Baystate



Molly Gray, administrative officer for Baystate Health Eastern Region.

officials had just 260 vaccinations left to give out, and hopes are that Moderna's COVID-19 vaccines will be on the way shortly; they've been ordered but they haven't yet arrived, she said.

The vaccines are given in a central location so those receiving shots can be monitored for any side effects. A small number of those receiving the vaccine may have an anaphylactic reaction to it, so benadryl and EpiPens are kept on hand. Of the 2,500 people receiving a vaccine at Baystate, three people experienced an immediate reaction but felt fine after taking benadryl, she said.

Gray said Baystate system-wide has 250 employees who



Megan Harvey, health sciences professor at Springfield College.

are out with COVID-19, or must quarantine themselves after being exposed the coronavirus. "Every little bit helps or hurts us," she said about the ups and downs of having staff out or having them back to work.

"The good news is what we're not seeing is the flu," Gray said. Healthcare officials across the country have worried here would be a "twindemic" of the flu and COVID-19 cases, which could overwhelm hospitals.

She said it has been really taxing and really tough for frontline workers, and JAC Patrissi, facilitator of the meeting, asked her to convey the group's gratitude for all their work.

Gray asked those attending to join her in role-modeling good behavior during the pandemic such as mask wearing, social distancing and refraining from large holiday gatherings.

Epidemiologist

Springfield College Professor of Health Sciences Megan Harvey said it is exciting because it looks like science will save the day with COVID-19 vaccines, which will help particularly frontline workers.

She said it is made of DNA from the coronavirus, which is then flipped to become RNA, but contains no actual virus material.

The coronavirus is more infectious than Ebola but less infectious than measles, mumps or rubella, but it's infectious enough to have its growth be exponential, she said.

Even with best estimates of COVID-19 deaths, the numbers indicate more people have died during the year than usual, and some of them are likely related to COVID issues.

As far as transmissions are concerned, big and small particles of the virus are spread, but it is also an airborne disease, because tiny particles can be suspended in the air for longer times and travel further making good ventilation important.

See VIIRUS OVERVIEW
page 8

Giving Feels Good

By Carole Gariepy

Did you ever read the quotation, "The heart that gives, gathers" by Hannah More? On the same thought as that, many years ago a Barre minister said, "If you're feeling low, go out and do something nice for someone." It's so true. We feel good when we do something

to make someone else feel good. When we give goodness, we gather goodness. The hearts of both the giver and receiver are touched.

A lot of giving goes on at the Congregational Church in Phillipston. We gather food items for needy families regularly and at Christmastime, the tree in church is decorated with Christmas cards that tell something to purchase for a needy family -- a game, an item of clothing, a grocery gift card, etc. We each take a card, purchase the wanted gift and wrap it, and then return it with the card tied on top. The missionary committee separates the gifts into the families we help and delivers them, feeling like the good Santas, a wonderful outreach the church has had for many years, and our Rev. Stephanie Flynn always participates in the project. We all can enjoy our Christmas Day a little more knowing we've helped others enjoy theirs. Knowing someone cares is probably even more important than the gifts the families receive.

We are all touched when someone "goes the extra mile." Well, we have a woman in our congregation, Brenda Nolan, who did something really unique for a needy family. She made an advent calendar, not the usual one, but one from an idea



Turley Publications Courtesy Photo
Brenda Nolan holds a heavy Advent Calendar bag of food

See GIVING page 8

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News of the Towns



Round Town

Ellenor Downer
413-967-3505

Church to hold outdoor candle light service

The Barre Congregational Church, 30 Park St., is continuing a 35 year tradition of celebrating Christmas Eve with a Family Christmas Eve service.

This year the service will be held on the front lawn of the church Thursday, Dec. 24 at 7 p.m. The service will include singing of Christmas carols, reading the Christmas story through scripture and candle lighting. The church members hopes that many people of all ages from the community will join them to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Candles and programs will be provided. Masks are required.

Library curbside pickup

Woods Memorial Library became the first library in the C/W MARS Network to enable its new Curbside Pickup feature, which allows patrons to make appointments from their library accounts. For patrons who usually receive automated email and text hold notifications, those were also re-enabled on that day. To use the new feature, place holds online at catalog.cwmars.org or by contacting the library via phone or email. As soon as the hold becomes available at the library, the patron will receive an automated email or text notification, as well as a second email or text with a link to make an appointment. Those who do not receive these notices will continue to be notified by phone. Follow the link to schedule an appointment during one of the available dates and times. Patrons will be redirected to log into their account first. They can also add notes, update and cancel appointments on this page. When the patrons arrive at the library during their designated time, they can click "Alert staff of your arrival" from their account on their mobile device. The button will not be active until their appointment time. Items will be checked out to patrons when they are picked up. Checkout receipts will be emailed automatically, although they may request a printed copy. Patrons must make an appointment through the catalog, by phone or by email in order to pick up material. The library cannot serve people without an appointment. For step-by-step instructions on how to use this new feature or for detailed instructions on the library's outdoor service procedures, people may contact the library by phone at 978-355-2533, email at barrelibrary@gmail.com or visit our website, www.barrelibrary.org.

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Where is this?



Turley Publications Photo by Ellenor Downer

This week's mystery photo is from Hardwick. If any readers know where this photo was taken, they may email edowner@turley.com or call the Barre Gazette at 413-967-3505, extension 100 with their answer by noon on Monday, Dec. 28. The names of those that correctly guessed the location will appear in next week's edition. Dick Clark, Stephen Craven, Judy Ruskowski, Bruce Towner and Jeremy Varnum correctly identified the photo. Last week's photo was the Civil War Monument on North Common in Barre.

National Audubon Society to host 121st CBC

REGION – Watchers and counters, who would like to help with the annual Christmas Bird Counts sponsored by National Audubon Society, are welcome.. All enthusiastic birders may participate. While a full day of birding can be rewarding, some may choose to spend only part of the designated day birding. Participants can be assigned areas within the count circle and cover them on foot, by car

or conduct a count of the birds coming to their yards and feeders if within the boundaries of a count circle.

Count circle territories may be viewed at https://audubon.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=fadfb421e-95f4949bde20c29a38228bd.

The Westminster Christmas Bird Count will take place Thursday, Dec. 31 and includes sections of Princeton,

Hubbardston, Gardner, Fitchburg, etc. Compiler is Charles Caron, who may be contacted 978-874-5649 or caron-env@aol.com.

The Quabbin Christmas Bird Count included the reservoir, sections of Hardwick, Ware, Petersham, Belchertown etc. and will be held Saturday, Jan. 2. Compiler is Scott Sumner and he can be contacted at ssumner@aol.com.

Have Something to Share?

Send your stories and photos to edowner@turley.com

Hubbardston

Ellenor Downer
edowner@turley.com



Medicare Savings program helps pay premium

The Massachusetts Medicare Savings Program pays your monthly Part B Premium, \$148.50 for 2021, and people may be eligible for significant assistance in paying their Medicare costs. They will also be eligible for Extra Help from Social Security to help pay their prescription drug costs. The income eligibility for a single person is \$1,755 and for a married couple \$2,371. Asset limits are \$15,720 single and \$23,600 for a married couple.

Medicare Advantage Plan enrollment

This period will run from Jan. 1 to March 31 of each year. During this timeframe, people can change to another Medicare Advantage Plan (HMO or PPO plans). They can also leave their Medicare Advantage Plan and return to Original Medicare and pick up a drug plan and supplement coverage. People must be in a Medicare Advantage Plan on Jan. 1 to take advantage of this. SHINE counselors are available to discuss Medicare questions or concerns. People may contact their SHINE counselor by phoning their local senior center.

Senior center activities

The Hubbardston Senior Center continues to slowly open. The senior center has space limitations, only 10 people allowed in the building at a time. Monday and Wednesday mornings Coffee With Friends is from 9 to 11 a.m. On Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9 to 11 a.m. is the Walking Club. Due to space limitations, please call to register for any of the activities below: Bingo: Monday 12-3 p.m. call Flo 978-928-5113 to register. Meals on Wheels: Call the Senior Center 978-928-1400 extension 211. Food delivery is on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Thursday is drive thru for food and eggs is 9:30 a.m. to noon. This schedule is subject to change due to COVID restrictions.

Barre Dining Center

BARRE — Elder Services of Worcester Area Nutrition Program welcomes guests to dine at the Barre Senior Center, 557 South Barre Road. The following meals will be served for the week of Dec. 28.

Meal sites are closed and there are only Meals on Wheels deliveries.

Volunteers are needed at the Barre dining site. Volunteers are needed for Meals on Wheels (mileage reimbursement) and in the kitchen. People should contact 978-355-5027.

MON. – Chicken Mornay, couscous, Roman blend vegetables, tapioca pudding, diet tapioca pudding, marble rye bread

TUES. – Meatloaf with gravy, garlic mashed potatoes, carrots, cookie, whole wheat bread

WED. – Fish with Parmesan cream sauce, wild rice, jardinière vegetables, fresh fruit, pumpkin bread

THURS. – Roast pork, herbed stuffing, California vegetables, cinnamon pears, muffin

FRI. – Holiday
No meal served
*Diabetic friendly dessert
**Higher sodium entree

Meal includes milk and margarine. Menus are subject to change. All meals are served at about 11:45 a.m. each weekday. Reservations should be made the day before by calling 978-355-5027 before 10:30 a.m. The donation of \$2.50 per meal helps keep the program running.

Corrections policy

The Barre Gazette will gladly correct factual errors that appear in this paper. Corrections or clarifications will always appear on Page 2. To request a correction, send information to Editor Ellenor Downer at barrenews@turley.com or call 978-355-4000. Corrections may also be requested in writing at Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005.

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News of the Towns

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Note: Many meetings are closed to the public or will be held remotely.

BARRE

Historical Commission – Jan. 4 at 7 p.m.
Board of Assessors – Jan. 5 at 7 p.m.
Felton Field Commission – Jan. 5 at 6:30 p.m.
Planning Board – Jan. 5 at 7 p.m.
Council on Aging – Jan. 6 at 1 p.m.
Barre Housing Authority – Jan. 7 at 3 p.m.
Board of Health – Jan. 11 at 5 p.m.
Water Commission – Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m.
DPW Commission – Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m.
Library Trustees – Jan. 13 at 7 p.m.
Sewer Commission – Jan. 21 at 7 p.m.
Cable Advisory Committee – Feb. 9 at 7 p.m.

HARDWICK

Recycling Commission – Jan. 5 at 6:30 p.m.
Board of Health – Jan. 7 at 6:30 p.m.
Paige Library Trustees – Jan. 7 at 7 p.m.
Gilbertville Public Library – Jan. 8 at 4 p.m.
Gilbertville-Wheelwright Sewer Commissioners – Jan. 11 at 6 p.m.
Council on Aging – Jan. 14 at 9:30 a.m.
Gilbertville Water District – Jan. 19 at 5:30 p.m.
Conservation Commission – Jan. 19 at 6:30 p.m.

HUBBARDSTON

Open Space Committee – Dec. 29 and Jan. 2 at 7 p.m.
Historic Commission – Jan. 2 at 10 a.m.
Board of Selectmen – Jan. 4 and Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m.
Conservation Commission – Jan. 5 at 7 p.m.
Board of Health – Jan. 6 at 10:30 a.m. and Jan. 12 at 6:30 p.m.
Planning Board – Jan. 7 at 6:30 p.m.
ZBA – Jan. 11 at 6:30 p.m.

PETERSHAM

Nichewaug Inn and Academy Committee 2020 – Dec. 28 at 6:30 p.m.
Open Space and Recreation Committee – Jan. 5 at 6:30 p.m.
Conservation Commission – Jan. 5 at 7:30 p.m.
Board of Health – Jan. 7 and Jan. 21 at 7 p.m.
Council on Aging – Jan. 11 at 10 a.m.
Cemetery Commission – Jan. 14 at 7 p.m.
Petersham Historic District – Jan. 21 at 7 p.m.

RUTLAND

Conservation Commission Site Walk – Jan. 2 at 10 a.m.
Public Hearing – Jan. 11 at 6 p.m.

Country Bank supports food pantries with \$130,000 donations

WARE/SPRINGFIELD/WORCESTER – Country Bank, a full-service financial institution serving central and western Massachusetts, donated over \$130,000 to local food pantries throughout the year to assist with supplying food to its communities. The Greater Boston Food Bank recently reported that food insecurities in Massachusetts reached an all-time high in November. The state has experienced a 59% increase since 2018, representing more than 1 million people in need of food assistance. Most people are using food pantries for the first time. Food insecurity is projected to increase to 81% for children, making Massachusetts the second-highest percentage change in the country.

As part of Country Bank's "Season of Giving Campaign," it donated additional funds to the Food Bank of Western Mass. and the Worcester County Food Bank. The donation was to honor its banking customers and partners in place of traditional holiday gifts. "This was such a great idea and so wonderful to help others at this difficult time," stated Therese Rakouskas, owner of Five Star Gardens in Palmer.

"We're so grateful to Country Bank for its social investment of \$20,000 in The Food Bank's mission to feed our neighbors in need at this critical time. With this support, we'll be able to provide 40,000 meals to households struggling to make ends meet and put healthy food on the table. For every dollar donated, we provide the equivalent of four meals," stated Andrew Morehouse, executive director of The Food Bank of Western Massachusetts.

"The pandemic has undoubtedly placed a strain on our local food pantries. As a community partner, we are fully committed to helping those in need throughout this pandemic," stated Jodie Gerulaitis, vice president, community relations at Country Bank.

To learn more about how people can help or if they need assistance, they may visit www.foodbankwma.org, <https://foodbank.org/> or www.feedingamerica.org.

Country Bank is a full-service mutual community bank serving central and western Massachusetts with 14 offices in Ware, Palmer, West Brookfield, Brimfield, Belchertown, Wilbraham, Ludlow, Leicester, Paxton, Charlton and Worcester.

Postponements and cancellations due to the coronavirus pandemic

Due to the social distancing requirements with the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual Christmas in New Braintree Craft Fair will not be held in December 2020. Next year's fair will take place Saturday, Dec. 11, 2021.

Given the current surge in COVID cases in the state, and with an abundance of caution for the health and safety of the cast and crew, Theatre at the Mount's live stream production of Winter Wonderettes is cancelled.

Second Chance needs zip bags for donations of pet food

EAST BROOKFIELD – Second Chance Animal Services is urgently asking for donations of zip style plastic bags to help meet the great need for pet food at area food pantries. The pandemic has financially impacted many pet owners. Distributions from the Second Chance pet food pantry have increased dramatically, wiping out the nonprofit's supply of large zip-style bags and the nonprofit is asking the community for help.

"As people finish up their holiday shopping, it would be great if they could consider donating a box or two of zip style plastic bags. We hope area businesses will check their supply shelves and consider donating any sturdy plastic zip style bags they aren't using or can't sell because the outer packaging has been damaged," said Second Chance CEO Sheryl Blancato.

"Our pet food pantry distributions have already increased 30% and the year isn't over. The need is great. We are working with more pantries this year and providing additional pet food to each pantry."

Second Chance receives donations of large bags of pet food, which are repackaged by volunteers into smaller bags for distribution so they can help all the pet owners, who need help feeding their pets.

Blancato said the greatest need is for thick plastic bags in gallon size or larger, but Second Chance can make use of all sizes. "This could be a great opportunity for area businesses to donate stock they no longer or can't use."

Second Chance founded the pet food pantry many years ago when they recognized that pet owners facing financial hardship will often go without to make sure their pet has food.

Donations can be dropped off at the Second Chance Adoption Center, 111 Young Road, East Brookfield. Businesses can email development@secondchanceanimals.org if they have questions or to schedule a large donation.

Second Chance is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization that began in 1999 in East Brookfield and relies solely on donations from grants to operate. The organization operates an adoption center in East Brookfield, Community Veterinary Hospitals in North Brookfield, Springfield, and Worcester. Second Chance helps over 40,000 pets a year through adoption, spay/neuter, veterinary care, community outreach, educational outreach programs, training, and a pet food pantry. For more information, people may visit Second Chance's website at www.secondchanceanimals.org.

Country Bank announces sponsorship with Worcester Red Sox

WORCESTER – Country Bank, a full-service financial institution serving the region with assets of \$1.8 billion, announced that it entered into an elite-level corporate sponsorship arrangement as a Founding Partner of the Worcester Red Sox.

Country Bank's multi-tiered sponsorship includes an iconic sign in right field atop the stands known as the "Worcester Wall" along with the Country Bank Guests Services located on the first base concourse. The partnership between the WooSox and Country Bank also underscores their mutual commitment to the community through the WooSox Foundation and Country Bank's Charitable Giving Program by supporting local non-profits in the region through a combined charitable giving campaign throughout the baseball season.

In addition, both organizations will be working together to launch a Teacher of the Month Program that recognizes the outstanding work teachers do every day to educate and support students. "We have been impressed and inspired by Country Bank's sense of community involvement," said WooSox President Dr. Charles A. Steinberg. "We see how helpful they are to various institutions and thousands of people in our region, and we welcome them to Polar Park with open arms as we work together to enhance the quality of life in our community even more." "In an era where spectator sports continue to be redefined by new norms of social distancing, sports sponsorships are taking on new forms. With that in mind, we couldn't be more excited to be a part of the WooSox and the Worcester community. The addition of



Turley Publications Courtesy Photo

Shown in front of the Country Bank sign at the new Worcester ball park are, from left, Paul Scully, president and CEO of Country Bank and Dr. Charles Steinberg, WooSox president.

year-round entertainment including ball games, concerts and various family activities at Polar Park, is exciting for the people and businesses in the region. We all look forward to the day when we can come together again at the ballpark enjoying activities with our families and friends. We also look forward to seeing our businesses thrive once again after being heavily impacted by the pandemic," said Paul Scully, President and CEO of Country Bank. To kick off their partnership, last week a team from Country Bank and the WooSox Mascot, Smiley Ball, delivered 500 Thanksgiving meals

prepared by Old Sturbridge Village along with iconic apple pies from Worcester based Table Talk Pies to the St. John's Food Pantry for the Poor. "The alignment of our organizational values with the WooSox solidifies our commitment to service and teamwork as we continually strive for excellence in all we do," shared Scully.

Country Bank is a full-service mutual community bank serving central and western Massachusetts with 14 offices in Ware, Palmer, West Brookfield, Brimfield, Belchertown, Wilbraham, Ludlow, Leicester, Paxton, Charlton, and Worcester.

Oakham

Ellenor Downer
edowner@turley.com



Church to hold candle light service

The Oakham Congregational Church will hold its annual Christmas Eve candle light service Thursday, Dec. 24 at 7 p.m. People should wear masks and follow social distancing.

Church services

Sunday, Dec. 27 the Oakham Congregational Church will hold its 10 a.m. worship service in the church sanctuary. There is no Sunday School on Dec. 27. Communion and Family Sunday will be held Sunday, Jan. 3. There is no Sunday School on Jan. 3. People should wear a mask and practice social distancing in the sanctuary. Sunday School will resume Sunday, Jan. 10 and is held downstairs in Fellowship Hall.

Todd Tallman to assume role of Cornerstone Bank CEO

WORCESTER — Effective Jan. 1, 2021, Cornerstone Bank President and Treasurer Todd Tallman will be appointed the Bank's CEO. Tallman steps into the role as a banking veteran with over 20 years of experience.

"Knowing Todd as well as I do, I am fully confident he will serve as an outstanding CEO," states K. Michael Robbins, who will retire as Cornerstone Bank CEO on Dec. 31, 2020, but continue to serve as the bank's chairman. "Todd's management, leadership and professional skills, not to mention that he's a fine, caring individual by nature, make him eminently qualified for this position."

A Certified Public Accountant, Tallman began his career as an audit manager at KPMG. After joining Southbridge Savings Bank in 1998 as chief financial officer, he served in increasingly senior positions until his promotion to President/CEO in 2014. Subsequently, in 2016, when Southbridge Savings Bank and SpencerBANK created a merger of equals to form Cornerstone Bank with assets totaling \$1.3 billion, Tallman was named president and treasurer.

With a passion for supporting communities and enriching the lives of others, Tallman serves on the boards of several nonprofit organizations including Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and is past President of the United Way of Southbridge, Sturbridge and Charlton.

"I can't thank Mike [Robbins] and the Cornerstone Board of Directors enough for the trust and confidence they are placing in me. As the saying goes, Mike will be a very tough act to follow. I'm tremendously excited about helping further Cornerstone's legacy as a financially sound, highly trusted community bank and I will ensure that, as a team, we are in the best position possible to make that happen."

Cornerstone Bank is an independent, mutual savings bank serving the residents, businesses, and communities throughout Central Massachusetts from offices in Charlton, Holden, Leicester, Rutland, Southbridge, Spencer, Sturbridge, Warren, Webster and Worcester, along with a Loan Center in Westborough.

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Opinion

Editorial

Yes, Virginia. There is a Santa Claus!

No one could have realized it back in 1897, but that’s when the New York Sun published what was to become an iconic part of local journalism history. The Sun printed what is now the most widely read letter to a newspaper. It was sent by an 8-year-old New York City girl named Virginia O’Hanlon. The response to her letter by editorial writer Francis Pharcellus Church is a message of love, magic and hope. Considering this past year, we imagine many readers could use a generous serving of that next to a plate of Christmas cookies. So, here is the full text of that historic letter:

Dear Editor,

I am 8 years old.
Some of my little friends say there is no Santa Claus.
Papa says, “If you see it in The Sun, it’s so.”
Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?

Virginia O’Hanlon

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their little minds. All minds, Virginia, whether they be men’s or children’s, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole truth and knowledge.

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies! You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that’s no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby’s rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God he lives and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay 10 times 10 thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

Guest Column

What do I miss?

By Carole Gariepy

Family gatherings? Visits with friends? Attending concerts? Travel? Church? Meetings? Eating out? Shopping? Going to the movies? I miss them all. I miss them all very much. However, technology has made it possible to have every one of those things still in our lives ... via the “new normal.”

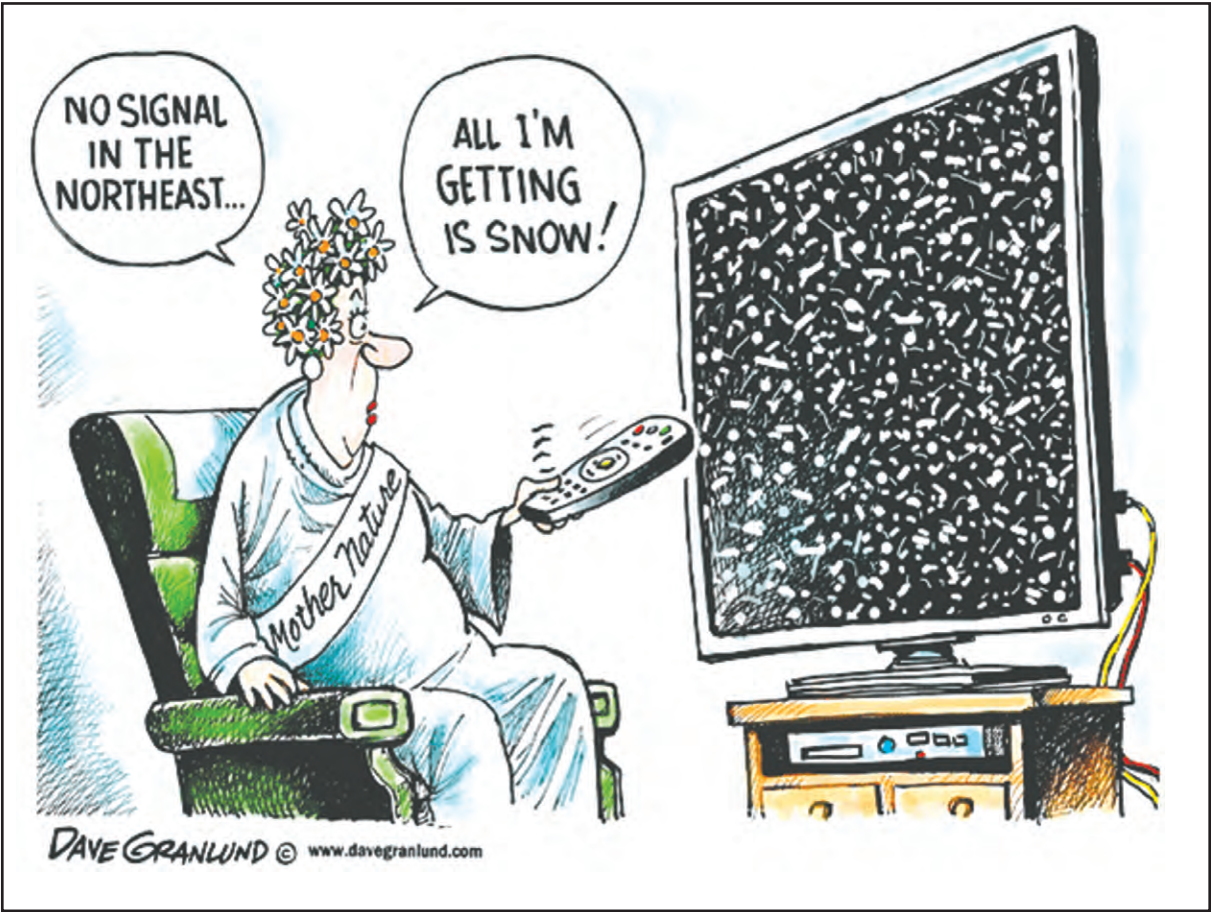
We can’t sit around the table with family and friends to eat and share stories, but we can gather together and visit on Zoom. We can’t attend a concert and there’s no substitute for live music, but good equipment provides pleasant listening experiences. We can’t take an overseas trip, but travel is available vicariously on TV, also in books that are full of detailed information and pictures about places all over the world. We can’t go inside to worship or go to meetings again Zoom provides. We can’t go to a restaurant to be served a meal, but take-out has answered eating-out, we still get a night-off cooking and can order our favorite meals to enjoy back at home. We are reluctant to go into stores, but online shopping is available; Amazon led the way and now other companies are following that enable us to shop in stores across the country and have items promptly delivered to our doorstep. Movie theaters closed, but Netflix and Amazon Prime find any movie we want and we can view it on our television, just have to make our own popcorn.

Everything is available ... well almost everything. Some important pieces are missing. Life has become like a puzzle that we’re trying to put together as best we can with some lost pieces.

Peace of mind is lost. The media’s updates and warnings have put the virus in the forefront of everyone’s mind. Wear a mask, wash your hands, keep a safe distance are the words we’ve all memorized. How we long to feel safe with the people and in places we’ve always enjoyed.

A change of scenery is lost. We’re at home so much, we are getting “cabin fever.” We’ve been an “on-the-go” society and suddenly we’re home-bodies. We long to once again be part of the outside world.

See GARIEPY, page 8



In Past Pages

5 years ago (Dec. 24, 2015)

While some people were enjoying a lazy Sunday morning, Stephanie Hardy and Abbey Rigney, two local women from Barre, were joining over 500 people to participate in the annual Worcester Jingle 5K, and the results were fantastic. Hardy represented Barre well as she was the first female to jingle her way to the finish line with an impressive time of 18:36, earning her 10th place overall. Rigney also turned in a personal best, running the downtown streets of Worcester and clocking in with a 20:15 time, landing her 29th place overall.

The town of Hardwick now owns the last standing one-room schoolhouse, School House #6 at 1674 Petersham Road, through the work of the town’s historical commission, according the Hardwick Historical Commission chairman Emily Bancroft. Historical commission member Jim Stafford has been working for months on cleaning the lot on which the school sits, and then shoveling out its interior. The town hopes Hardwick and area residents will be interested in donating and volunteering so it can either be restored or a replica built, Stafford said. The Jaksthis family, owned the schoolhouse since 1937 and used it for sorting a wide variety of objects including manure and a lot of wood to name a few. The family heirs gifted it to the town early this year. It was originally one of 10 one-room schoolhouses throughout the town, and #6 was used from 1888 to 1929. Its student population ranged from 12 to 15 in the early 1900s, to a low of eight in 1929, according to Bancroft.

Neil Viner of Rutland took a dip in the ocean at York Beach, Maine on Dec. 12. He did it this year and plans to do it every year to raise money for Atlantic Dippers for Homeless Vets of Worcester. The funds raised will be used to fill a wish list for the veterans of Worcester. Viner hopes to fill the back of his pickup truck with donations for deliver on Christmas morning.

10 years ago (Dec. 30, 2010)

St. Peters Catholic Church, Petersham enjoyed the reenactment of the birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ at its Christmas Eve celebration provided by the youth of the parish. During the Gospel read by Deacon Paul Mello, the children participated in the various roles of that historic event. Angels, shepherds, kings, the star and of course the Holy Family were played by parish youth. The celebrant of the Mass, Rev. Krzysztof Korcz, associate pastor

LOOK BACK Gilbertville 8th Grade - 1951-1952



Turley Publications Submitted Photo
This photo shows the 1951-1952 8th grade class of the Gilbertville middle school. Can you identify any of these students? If you can, please email barrenews@turley.com or call 413-967-3505 extension 100.

of St. Peter’s, provided a homily that was geared specifically to the young people of the parish and was presented at their level.

Steven Tambolleo of Barre received the Honorable Delegate Award as part of UMass Lowell’s team in this year’s Northeast Regional Model Arab League Competition that took place in Boston. Tambolleo is a freshman majoring in mechanical engineering. He was part of the Environmental Council representing the country of Syria.

With tickets in hand, the pajama-clad first-graders hopped around the “Polar Express train” – the creation of teachers Rachel Brunell and Nicole Ricchiazzi, with help from Title 1 tutor, Jennifer Giancaterino and Special Education Aide, Bonnie Robinson. The teachers converted Brunell’s classroom into a special train, with the desks pushed together and the chairs lined up into the shape of a train. White Christmas lights surrounded the train and candy canes were hung from the ceiling. Once aboard the train, the students were served hot chocolate of course, and they watched the Polar Express movie on the large SmartBoard screen. Mr. Guilbault served as the conductor.

25 years ago (Dec. 28, 1995)

A group of senior citizens form the nutrition site in Barre recently attended the luncheon program at Montachusett Regional Vocational Technical School in Fitchburg. Door prize winners of the holiday items made by students in the building and grounds maintenance department are Evelyn Mikelk of

North Brookfield and Philippa Jackson of Barre.

Those elves from the North got busy and made the No. 4 Schoolhouse Christmas party a joyous occasion. Ted Kelley lit the stove and Robin decorated the tree, the walls and the windows. Amy Grandone sent out notice. A bearded figure dressed in red and white appeared, strolling through the snow outside the big schoolhouse windows – Santa Claus! As he called out names and handed out presents, one after another of the youngsters climbed up onto his lap and gave him their special messages. All Santa asked for was a song. Everyone sang “Jingle Bells,” then giving a wave, out the door Santa goes!

Cheryl Litchwell of Hale Road, Hubbardston has been honored by the Leominster Art Association as its Artist of the Month for December. Though she works in pastel chalk, Cheryl points out that her works are called paintings, because the majority of the art surface is covered with color, as opposed to drawings, where a large portion of the art space is uncolored and blank.

38 years ago (Dec. 30, 1982)

Julia Sullivan is home with her dad and brother, James E. Sullivan and John of Summer Street, Barre. She will return to Harvard College in Boston where she is a freshman.

The Christmas Door Decorating Contest sponsored by the Hubbardston Public Library Trustees was judged last Monday following a party by the Trustees. First prize was awarded to Mr.

See PAST PAGES page 6

Letters to the Editor

Reader questions vaccine priority

Massachusetts authorities have given incarcerated criminals a top priority for receiving the Covid19 vaccine. A priority equal to doctors, nurses and healthcare workers. Somehow protecting the lives of murderers, rapists, thieves, child molesters, etc. is deemed more important than the lives of their victims or the lives of law-abiding citizens.

The mamby-pamby justification the government offers for this “criminals first” justification is that prisoners are “forced” to live in close quarters making them more susceptible to infection. Give me a break. These criminals did something harmful enough to land them in jail. They harmed others. How in the world should they receive life-saving vaccinations before those they harmed. Choices have to be made. Who deserves the vaccination more, criminals or law-abiding citizens?

Sincerely,
Paul Gallo
Barre

Task force supports police department funding

It has come to our attention that Hardwick budget reductions have resulted in cuts to the Hardwick Police Department. We understand that times are hard and budget cuts are being made across the board. We also want to take this time to emphasize that Hardwick police, led by Chief James Ayotte, have been invaluable partners in our collaborative efforts to end domestic violence in the region.

Our local domestic violence advocates routinely report to the Task Force that Hardwick police do an excellent job when responding to domestic violence. They are professional, kind, supportive and always go the extra mile in order to connect victims and survivors with local advocacy services. They do this knowing that domestic violence is the most dangerous call police officers face. This is not something that we take for granted and this exemplary level of responsive service is not provided in all towns.

We hope the town will consider the critical role Hardwick police play in keeping victims, survivors and families safe as they make admittedly difficult future budget decisions. We want to close by conveying our gratitude and thanks to the Chief Ayotte and the Hardwick Police Department for the excellent and critical work they do to end domestic violence.

Sincerely,
Jennie Simmons
Erin Ballard
JAC Patrissi
Peggy Baxter
Rebekah L. Cornell
Monica Moran
Jason Patrissi
Pat James
Shannon Eldredge
Paula Kularski
Chris Pollock
Members of Ware River Valley Domestic Violence Task Force

Turley Publications Letters to the Editor Policy

Letters to the editor should be 350 words or less in length. No unsigned or anonymous opinions will be published. We require letter writers to include his or her town of residence and home telephone number. We must authenticate authorship prior to publication. We reserve the right to edit or withhold any submissions deemed to be libelous or contain unsubstantiated allegations, personal attacks, defamation of character and offensive language. All unknown or alleged facts and quotations offered by the author need to cite credible, unbiased sources. Send letters to: Barre Gazette, P.O. Box 448, Barre, MA 01005 or via email to edowner@turley.com. The deadline for submissions is Friday at noon.

BARRE GAZETTE

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Have Something
to Share?

Send your stories and
photos to
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Serenity Hill Sampler

by Jane McCauley

Merry Christmas to all my readers and the staff at The Barre Gazette. This has been a very trying year for all of us, but especially for the seniors who need help but can't have it. So many of the notes that my friends and relatives wrote to me on Christmas cards mentioned how bored they are.

Luckily, I can't say I'm bored as I have many hobbies and have been enjoying several of them while in quarantine. Several of my friends that I called like to knit, water color, oil paint, do genealogy and this is a good time to do this.

We stayed home for Thanksgiving and plan to for Christmas. The presents were delivered to the immediate families and each family is staying home. My daughter wanted me to join Zoom, but I have enough brain stuff to handle now at age 84.

Here are a couple of recipes for Christmas candy, which those so inclined may make to help them have a better Christmas.

My dear friend Dot Cohn gave me this recipe and it is quick and easy to make.

PECAN BRITTLE

1 cup sugar

1/2 cup light corn syrup
1 cup pecan pieces
1 teaspoon butter
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon baking soda

Combine sugar and corn syrup in a 1-1/2 qt. microwave safe bowl, stirring well. Microwave at high four minutes; stir in pecans. Microwave at high five to seven minutes or until lightly browned. Stir in butter and vanilla; microwave one minute. Stir in baking soda until foamy. Pour mixture onto a lightly greased baking sheet; cool on pan on a wire rack. Break into pieces and store in an airtight container. Yield 3/4 lb.

Another close late friend, Dorothy Salminen, gave me this quick recipe for two minute microwave fudge.

TWO MINUTE MICROWAVE FUDGE

1 lb. powdered sugar
2/3 cup cocoa
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup milk
2 teaspoons vanilla
1/2 cup butter or margarine
1/2 cup chopped walnuts

Sift powdered sugar, cocoa and salt into a 1 quart microwave safe

bowl. Stir in milk and vanilla, mix well. Place butter or margarine on top. Microwave and cook on high two minutes. Remove from microwave. Beat with a wooden spoon until smooth, stir in nuts. Spread into a buttered 8 by 8 by 4 inch pan. Chill about 1 hour or until firm. Cut into 36 pieces. As you can tell my friends know I have a "sweet tooth."

This and That

This week in order not to be bored, I called several friends and wished them well. I sewed several Christmas stockings using some quilted fabrics I had made. I water colored about 25 greeting cards and sorted out my craft supply direction folders. Some things I have saved I will never make so in the trash they will go. With the manila folders, I cut them and make holes and use them for dividers on my genealogy notebooks.

I plan to keep my Christmas tree up after the holidays and make it into a Valentine tree. I have the stuffed Valentines that I made last year. Hopefully by then I may have had the vaccine and may be able to get out and about. Happy holidays and make the best of it.

In My Backyard by Ellenor Downer

Last week I received calls from two different residents in Belchertown. One had four blue-birds and the other had three female pine grosbeaks at their feeding tray for the first time ever.

Pine grosbeaks are an irruptive species. Bird watchers are seeing many irruptive species evening grosbeaks, pine siskins, red-breasted nuthatches and pine grosbeaks.

Pine grosbeaks are nine inches long. The male has a rose-red head, chest and back. The wings are black with two white wing bars and a stubby black bill. The female is similar to the male, but she has olive-yellow on the head and rump.

Immature male pine grosbeaks are like the adult female, but they have an orangish head and rump. The immature female is similar to the adult female. Immatures keep this plumage for one year. Pine grosbeaks forage on the ground and in foliage for seeds, nuts, buds

and fruits. They also eat insects. At feeders, they prefer sunflower seeds.

The female lays two to six blue green eggs with dark marks in a nest of mosses, twigs, roots, lichens and grasses. These grosbeaks summer in coniferous woods, high montane forests and winter near fruit and seed trees. They may associate with Bohemian waxwing flocks.

The pine grosbeak song is a musical warble. Its call is a three note whistle with the middle note highest like "teeweetee."

Northern harrier

A Hubbardston couple feed the birds under a crab apple tree on the front yard. Sunday the husband looked to see what birds were feeding. The wife said, "He looked further out and saw a hawk feeding on something on the ground. He called me and we thought the hawk had gotten a bird. He took his binoculars out and he could see that the hawk

was a Northern Harrier so he put his outside clothes on and went to investigate further as the hawk kept eating until he got to about four feet from him. It was not a bird, but a red squirrel he was eating." The harrier flew away and the couple were glad it was not a bird.

Birds at my feeders

Dec. 18, I counted seven blue jays at my feeder, all at once. I also had a red-bellied woodpecker ad a downy woodpecker eating seeds off the ground. A Carolina wren came to the tray feeder. American goldfinch, black-capped chickadees, tufted titmice and juncos love the Nigier or thistle seeds I put out. I put the Nigier feeder up in hopes of attracting pine siskins, so far no luck

People may report a bird sighting or bird related experience by calling me at 413-967-3505, leaving a message at extension 100 or emailing mybackyard88@aol.com or edowner@turley.com.

Memories bring you home again

This will be the first year in many decades that I won't celebrate Christmas with my siblings. I am certain that many of you are in the same boat, so to speak. While we are all doing what we can to slow the spread of the virus, it doesn't always come easy. Reflecting back on the Christmases of my childhood conjure up so many wonderful memories; many of them involving plants of one kind or another. Read on for some McQuaid nostalgia.

I'd start bugging my dad around Halloween to visit the local tree farm to tag our Christmas tree. Lucky for me he knew the owners, so when we knocked on the door in late October we were handed a tag and a grease pen without so much as a strange glance. I was very particular about my tree, that is why we "tagged" so early. It had to be on the tall side, but stout. Not perfect, by any means; there had to be "holes" in which to put the houses and the bird's nests. It seemed, though, that we always picked the first coldest day of the year. Dad's bum finger would be blue, but no matter, he'd humor me as I'd circle the tree farm from front to back at least twice to get the "best" tree.

Fast forward to the day after Thanksgiving when my parents and older siblings home from college or work would trek up into the woods, passing by the "cellar hole" ending up by the "big rock." With garbage bags in hand we'd pick Princess Pine, enough to make a wreath for our door, and one each for the other kids to

take back with them.

This was a grand adventure for a small child. It seemed as if we were in no man's land, although we were likely less than a quarter of a mile from home! When we were sure we had enough we'd head back down the hill, and dad would get right to work. I can still picture him on the back porch bending a coat hanger into a circle, attaching some wire and reaching into the bag of greens to gather up bunches and attach them to the frame. He used to do such a good job that you couldn't tell where he started or finished and you could use either side of the wreath; both looked the same! Mom would add a red bow, some fake berries and a pine cone or two and off it went to New Jersey, New York or wherever education and destination took my brothers and sister.

Another early Christmas memory was of a white pine Christmas tree my next oldest brother decorated for his room. It was tiny, and a real "Charlie Browner" but as a little kid I thought it was really cool how he made the ornament by rolling tiny Styrofoam balls in glitter then decorating them with ric rac. The coffee can filled with sand as his "stand" was pretty cool too. When I mentioned the tree to him just recently he had forgotten all about it.

One especially fond remembrance is of my babci's Christmas



Roberta McQuaid
Columnist

cactus ablaze in blooms on a plant stand in my mother's room. I ended up with the plant as well as its stand. And although I rarely achieve the fireworks babci or my mother did, this year I did have a dozen or so of the fuchsia-colored flowers, starting around Thanksgiving and continuing to Christmas. The plant is mostly in good shape for being close to a century old!

I have children of my own now and it's fun to intersperse our new traditions with some from my own childhood. Right after Thanksgiving I make a wreath for a friend's birthday. And although I don't drag my husband to the tree farm in October, I do make him circle the farm a few times to make sure we find the perfect tree.

Whatever your memories are, share them, and if the mood suits you, write them down for your kids and grandkids to enjoy.

Merry Christmas!

Roberta McQuaid graduated from the Stockbridge School of Agriculture at the University of Massachusetts. For the last 28 years, she has held the position of staff horticulturalist at Old Sturbridge Village. She enjoys growing food as well as flowers. Have a question for her? Email it to ekennedy@turley.com with "Gardening Question" in the subject line.

Bright Nights at Forest Park extended to 9:30 p.m.

SPRINGFIELD – Bright Nights at Forest Park has received permission from Lieutenant Governor Karen Polito to extend entry to the show until 9:30 p.m., as of Dec. 5.

The Spirit of Springfield had been allowing cars to enter Forest Park until 8:45 p.m. due to Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker's current COVID-19 order.

"It is an extra 45 minutes of holiday cheer each night during a time when it is so needed," said Spirit of Springfield President Judy Matt. "We want as many families as possible to fill their hearts with the warmth of the holiday season while staying safe in their car. We are grateful to have the opportunity to continue to make Bright Nights a holiday tra-

dition for so many."

Bright Nights at Forest Park will operate nightly through Jan. 6, opening at 4:45 p.m. and closing the entrance at 9:30 p.m. To follow COVID-19 safety protocols, tickets must be purchased in advance, online at brightnights.org or at Big Y World Class Markets. Visitors must stay in their vehicles at all times and wear masks when interacting with others. Restrooms are available at the entry for emergency use only.

Bright Nights' 26th season is sponsored by AAA - Pioneer Valley, American Eagle Financial Credit Union, American Medical Response, Balise Auto, Baystate Health, Big Y World Class Markets, C & S Wholesale Grocers, Charlie

Arment Trucking Inc., Comcast, Eversource Energy, Gleason Johndrow Landscaping, Health New England (HNE), iHeart Media, MassLive, MassMutual, Mercy Medical Center, MGM Springfield, MP PC, PeoplesBank, The Republican, Smith & Wesson, Springfield Thunderbirds, and WWLP-22News.

The Spirit of Springfield has been collaborating with the Springfield Department of Parks, Buildings and Recreation Management since 1995 to present Bright Nights at Forest Park. The holiday lighting experience has entertained more than six million people and this year as recognized by the American Bus Association as one of their Best of the Best in their Festival and Events category.

Guest Column

Adventures of Gertrude the Cat

By Ruth Robinson

Dear folks,
Missy has just come in from shoveling snow across the deck to the bird feeder. She is stamping her feet to get all the snow off. She says we are going to get a lot of that fluffy stuff today.

I am watching my birdies and yes the sky is certainly sending that white stuff down fast and furious. Missy is getting things ready in case of a power outage. That often happens with a good storm.

She is also checking her mouse traps to see if she has any more mice. The traps were empty this morning. She offered the dead mice to me and I just look at her and turn my head. She knows I don't like them dead and don't

even do much hunting of live ones in this old age. Mice really don't interest me much anymore. Of course, if the time is right when I am down cellar, I will make a feeble attempt to chase them with no real ambition to catch one. They don't taste good anymore and we don't have many because Missy is always setting traps for them.

Missy has been busy putting things in the spare room on the bed this morning and I think she is going to do something with all those bows and paper. I will jump up on the top of the bed and watch her. Yep, she is starting to wrap up the presents she has placed on the



bed. Whoop, she lost a bow on the floor and I am jumping right down to play with it. The bow moves very nicely under the bed and all around that area. I wonder if I can pick it up with my mouth and put it under the computer table with all my other trinkets. Nope, it is just too awkward to pick up and stay in my mouth.

Oh, well, I had fun trying anyway. I think I will return to the couch and watch the snow come down and see what my birdies are doing.

Happy holidays to all,
Love,
Gertrude

Fewer Massachusetts residents plan to travel

AAA Travel expects the vast majority of Americans to stay home this holiday season. Public health concerns and travel guidance are influencing their decisions not to travel over the year-end holidays, a period that typically sees high demand for vacations. While AAA expects at least 34 million fewer travelers compared to last year's holiday season, as many as 84.5 million Americans may still travel from Dec. 23 through Jan. 3, a decline in travel of at least 29%.

Massachusetts is following the national trend with one million fewer residents planning to travel by all methods this year, a decrease of 40% from 2019. The number traveling by car will be down more than 800,000, 36% less than last year.

The CDC urges Americans not to travel for the holidays this year, warning that travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19.

For those who make the personal decision to travel, it is important to understand the risks involved and take steps to keep themselves and others safe. Seek the advice of a trusted travel advisor and refer to AAA's COVID-19 Travel

Restrictions Map and TripTik.AAA.com for the latest state and local travel restrictions and to help determine which rest stops, gas stations, restaurants and hotels are open along the route.

Holiday travelers are continuing to take a wait-and-see approach to their travel decisions. With COVID 19 cases steadily increasing this month, the expected continued rise will likely prompt some Americans to make last minute decisions to not follow through with upcoming travel plans, which was the trend during the lead up to Thanksgiving.

Based on mid-October travel forecast models, AAA expected up to 50 million people would travel for the Thanksgiving holiday, which would have been a decline of 10% from 2019. While final Thanksgiving travel numbers are not yet available, AAA expects the decline to be closer to 15-20%, as the CDC and state and local authorities advised against holiday travel.

Most Americans who decide to travel will do so by car, with road trips accounting for 96% of holiday travel. Up to 81 million Americans will travel by car, a decline of at least 25% compared to last year. Auto travel is expected to replace

some trips previously taken by bus, train or airplane, given the flexibility, security and comfort traveling by car provides.

For those who decide to hit the road for the year-end holidays, gas prices remain nearly 50 cents cheaper than this time last year. Recent monthly gas prices are 19% below 2019 averages.

AAA reminds those hitting the road to plan their route in advance and ensure their vehicle is ready for the road, to help avoid a breakdown along the way.

As many as 2.9 million travelers are expected to book flights for the holidays, a decline of nearly 60% from 2019. Air travelers can likely expect to pay lower airfares this holiday season, as AAA has seen double-digit reductions in average flight costs. AAA reminds air travelers to wear their mask and wipe down seats, armrests, belt buckles and tray tables using disinfecting wipes, as an extra precaution. Meanwhile, up to 480,000 Americans are expected to travel by other modes, including bus and train this holiday season, a sharp decline of 87% as some bus and train trips will be shifted to car travel or cancelled.

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To celebrate **CHRISTMAS**, the Advertising Deadline will be **NOON - FRI., DEC. 18** for the week of **Dec. 22-25**

To celebrate **NEW YEAR**, the Advertising Deadline will be **NOON - WED., DEC. 23** for the week of **Dec. 29-Jan. 1**

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Early Deadlines

for all PUBLIC NOTICES...

to run the week of **December 21-25, 2020:**

- **Thursday, Dec. 17 at NOON**
The Register, Sentinel, The Wilbraham-Hampden Times, Agawam Advertiser News, Quaboag Current
- **Friday, Dec. 18 at Noon**
Barre Gazette, Country Journal, Ware River News, The Journal Register
- **Monday, Dec. 21 at noon**
Town Reminder, Chicopee Register and The Holyoke Sun

Happy Holidays!

Happy New Year!

to run the week of **December 28 - January 1, 2021:**

- **Wednesday, Dec. 23 at noon**
The Register, Sentinel, The Wilbraham-Hampden Times, Agawam Advertiser News, Quaboag Current, Barre Gazette, Country Journal, Ware River News, The Journal Register
- **Monday, Dec. 28 at noon**
Town Reminder, Chicopee Register and The Holyoke Sun

Church News

Local pastors offer sermons

Mary, Did You Know?

A series of timeless characters appear in the birth narratives of Christ. Perhaps none are more central than that of Mary. Consider that this young girl, a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, was told she would supernaturally conceive a child who would change the course of human history—a child who would be called the Son of the Most High God, reigning over a kingdom that would never end (cf. Luke 1:31-33).

What did Mary feel toward this singular calling? More importantly for the sake of our discussion today, what did Mary know or understand regarding the unique nature and mission of her child? These questions and more have fascinated scholars and students of Scripture for millennia! In many ways, answers will forever elude us as the Word of God reveals only the following concerning Mary and her response to the messages she received about her son, Jesus:

Luke 2:19 (NIV)

19 . . . Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.

Of course, this has not stopped us from speculating, “What did Mary know?” In fact, one of the more popular songs of the Christmas season causes us to wonder at the depth and breadth of Mary’s insight through a series of unanswered questions: i.e., “Mary, Did You Know?” I would ask that you consider the following song lyrics slowly and prayerfully:

Mary, did you know that your baby boy

Would one day walk on water?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy

Would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy

Has come to make you new?

This child that you delivered, will soon deliver you

Mary, did you know that your baby boy

Would give sight to a blind man?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy

Would calm the storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy

Has walked where angels trod?

When you kiss your little baby

You kiss the face of God

The blind will see, the deaf will hear,

The dead will live again

The lame will leap, the dumb will speak

The praises of the Lamb

Mary, did you know that your baby boy

Is Lord of all creation?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy

Would one day rule the nations?

Did you know that your baby boy

Is heaven’s perfect Lamb?

That sleeping child you’re

Holding is the great, I Am

What did Mary know about the child that she bore? Did she truly perceive the wonder of His nature and work? Truthfully, we do not know as the Bible is silent on such matters. Perhaps we can ask her when we meet in eternity! However, I think a more pressing

and urgent question is, “What do you know concerning Jesus?” in the here and now? What do you believe to be true about Him and how does such knowledge inform and impact the manner in which you live your life?

Give careful thought to these concluding questions, borrowed from the abovementioned song lyrics:

Do you recognize His divine power? Do you know that the One who walked on water, calmed the storm, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead and more is still alive and well, willing to work the miraculous on the behalf of those who look to Him (Matthew 7:7-8)?

Do you realize that Jesus is still able and willing to deliver you from the penalty of sin, rescue you from the power of sin, restore you to right relationship with God and grant you the fullness of life now and forevermore (John 3:16; Ephesians 2:1-10)? This is the “good news” or the “gospel” that Christians proclaim!

Do you know that Jesus Christ is coming again to establish a rule and reign that shall be blessed and everlasting (Daniel 7:13-14)?

Do you recognize that a time is coming when all who have been touched and changed by Him throughout space and time will assemble to give Him the honor He deserves in a never-ending chorus of praise (Revelation 7:9-10)?

Do you realize that the child we celebrate at Christmas grew up to give His life for you so that you might live forever with Him (Matthew 20:28)? Do you understand that the “I Am” who sent Moses to save His people from Egypt (Exodus 3) took it upon Himself to come and save you from death, hell and the grave!

In some ways it doesn’t matter what Mary knew in centuries past. What matters is what you know today! May this Christmas be for you a season of deeper devotion, enriched faith, and abounding joy! Merry Christmas to you all! Thank you for taking the time to read this publication. Feel free to check us out online at www.NewLifeBarre.org or visit us in person each Sunday at 10:30am (COVID-19 protocols are presented on the aforementioned website). We hope to see you soon.

Pastor James Foley

*New Life Assembly of God
South Barre*

“The Son of the Most High”

(Our services can be watched on the church website at www.barrechurch.com and Facebook page)

Scripture Reading:
Luke 1 v 26-38

I. Introduction:

I was born in a small town in South Africa, about the size of Barre. Kenhardt is situated in the Northern Cape province of South Africa. It is mainly semi-desert area, called the Karoo area, with very little rainfall. It gets extremely hot there during the summer, and the main vegetation one sees for miles and miles is what is called the Karoo bush, a little grey-brown shrub that looks really attractive in its own way, if you like going to the desert. For me as a child, I did not think of Kenhardt as a small town, it was just my town and I was very proud of it. My family decided to move closer to the City of Cape Town,

about 8 hours away when I finished second grade. I remember how sad I was to say goodbye to my second-grade teacher and my classmates. So, while life changed a lot for us, for me, as I traveled to many places and then came to the US and settled here, Kenhardt still has a very special place in my heart. It is also the place where my father was buried, and many family members who themselves have moved away, still try to have family reunions in Kenhardt.

So, when I came to Barre a few years ago, I felt at home, because I felt that same feeling of welcome and community life similar to what I feel when I go to Kenhardt. I have watched how many of you know one another, and where I hear the comment, oh yes, so and so can do this for us, because we know him or her for such a long time! Some of you who have asked me why I came to Barre? First of all, I was invited of course, but being in Barre and among you, feels really good. It feels familiar to me.

II. What good can come from Nazareth?

You have heard the question, “What good can come out of Nazareth?” It was a question asked by Nathanael to his friend, Phillip, in John 1 v 46. When Nathanael came face to face with Jesus and Jesus told him that He knew him, sitting under the fig tree, before his friend Phillip introduced him to Jesus, Nathanael exclaimed by saying, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel.” It is a good question to ask in Sunday School or Bible studies...what good can come of out Nazareth, and see what reaction the question evokes, and what discussion follows!

We see in our passage the angel Gabriel appear to Mary, in the little town of Nazareth, and told her she would give birth to a son, and she must call Him Jesus. That is the core of this message. Nothing much is said about her, other than letting the reader know that she is a virgin, from a small town of little significance. We can only imagine Mary’s immediate reaction when she was approached by the angel who told her, “You are highly favored!” She was a bit frazzled about this message because she was just carrying on with her life in Nazareth. But then we see how she started to engage in the conversation with the angel. Her life would change drastically after this interaction.

III. The Son of the Most High

The Angel Gabriel gave Mary a very clear purpose and message. She will conceive a son, and she must name him Jesus. He would be great, because He would be the Son of the Most High.

He will be known as the Son of God, before even taking up any functions of Kingship, says David Garland and Clinton Arnold in their commentary on Luke. He will receive the throne of David, the dynasty that was promised by Samuel and the messianic predictions made in the Old Testament were made about Him. He is the Messiah, and she will give birth to Him. It also means that He will be more important than all earthly kings and powers. He will be uniquely powerful and will fulfill God’s plans for Israel and the world’s salvation. What enormous weight and responsibility placed on this young woman.

So, how will this happen, given

that I am a virgin, and do not have intimate relations with

Joseph, she questions the angel. His answer is simple and powerful and uncomplicated. Your son will be conceived by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Most High, who is the same Spirit who has been with the people of Israel throughout their history. The Holy Spirit will come over you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, protect you and enable this conception. Oh, and your relative Elizabeth, just so you know, has also fallen pregnant at her old age, and she is in her sixth month, because ...nothing is impossible with God. Your Son is already in a relationship with God, and you are an instrument in the hands of God to receive Him and to give birth to Him. God is completely in control of this mysterious occurrence, so you need not worry. All will be fine. This is God’s favor upon you, and it is God’s will that this happens.

This last part about God being in control must have made Mary feel much more comfortable, because we then see her surrender willingly to the call from God to be God’s slave, which in this case does not mean anything degrading, but being a willing and humble participant with God in a historic and holy act for the redemption and salvation of the world.

IV. From a small town to becoming God’s instrument

The town which we as a family finally decided to settle in, is called Wellington. Wellington is about an hour away from the City of Cape Town, and is a beautiful, mountainous area, with exquisite vineyards in the valleys, quite different from Kenhardt. It is quite a bit bigger, with a population of 55,000 plus people, but I consider Wellington a nice small town where many memories have been made, one of them receiving my call to the ministry as the first woman in South Africa’s then Dutch Reformed Mission Church, the historically Coloured Church. The church changed its name to the Uniting Reformed Church in SA when it united with the black and Indian churches.

Thinking about my life in these two small towns and how God spoke to me in miraculous ways and called me to be an instrument in God’s hands, is so humbling. But to read this story of Mary and her encounter with the angel Gabriel again, is so extraordinary, and I cannot even imagine the feelings, the questions, the awesomeness of the experience must have been for her. She would be the mother of the Son of the Most High! She would raise him, always with the awareness that He was given to her with a special purpose in mind.

V. Conclusion

What is your story in Barre, and how has God spoken to you on your journey? How did your story impact your life in the congregation? How does God still speak to you as you live your life in service to God here at our church?

During a time like this, there are many losses, loss of life, of community, of jobs and security, of movement and more. There are feelings of despair, concern, and separateness from one another. As I was about to finish my sermon, I received a message from South Africa that a close colleague of mine died from COVID-19. I was shocked and heartbroken, because he and I shared the same office for two years at the college we taught. He was a leader in the field of Reconciliation in SA, he was a marathon runner, after he had a heart transplant and he was an international spokesperson for those with heart transplants. Sure, his must have been recognized as an underlying health condition, but for me he was not just another number or statistic. He was a friend and colleague, and I was wondering how this sermon makes sense during a time like this, where death and dying have become so part of life, on a huge scale?

I was then reminded by a friend in SA that Christ is our hope, because this Son of the Most High knows what suffering is. He stands inside our situation today, and with the loss comes hope, the hope of eternal life, given to us by the Son of Nazareth. May all of us cherish our precious encounters with the Son of the Most High in our lives and as we approach Christmas, let the town of Nazareth become even more meaningful in our hearts and our minds as we think of Mary’s encounter with the angel Gabriel. Let us also tell our own stories to one another about God’s work in our lives in Barre, and all surrounding towns near and far.

Amen

Pastor Margaret Keyser

Barre Congregational Church

Congregational church to hold Christmas Eve service

BARRE – People are invited to celebrate the birth of Baby Jesus at the Barre Congregational Church, 30 Park St. on Christmas Eve, Thursday, Dec. 24 by the crèche outside at 7 p.m.

The candlelight service will be held weather permitting. The service will include singing of Christmas carols, reading the Christmas story through scripture and candle lighting. The church

members hope that many people of all ages from the community will join them. Candles and programs will be provided. Masks are required.

The 11 p.m. Christmas Eve service will be celebrated online by YouTube www.youtube.com/watch?v=QtVXXriWCx4. People can watch the service anytime after noon Dec. 24 in the comfort of their homes.

Tri-Parish Community Church news

HARDWICK — The Tri-Parish Community Church will meet at the Hardwick Universalist Church for the last time this year at 10 a.m. on Dec. 27. Social distancing and masks required. The service will be led by Deacon Ginny Rich. If Covid permits, the Tri-Parish will then move east for the New Year on Jan. 2, 2021 to the New Braintree Congregational Church.

Red Cross urges blood donation

MEDFORD – December may be the season of giving, but it’s typically a challenging time to collect enough blood donations. Add in a pandemic and this year could be even tougher than usual. That’s why the American Red Cross is urging those who are feeling well to give the gift of life by donating blood or platelets this holiday season.

The need for blood doesn’t stop for holidays. Between Thanksgiving and Christmas, more than 1 million blood transfusions will be given in the United States. Donations of all blood types are needed to ensure hospital shelves remain stocked to meet patient blood needs.

Donor may make an appointment to give blood, platelets or plasma with the Red Cross by downloading the Red Cross Blood Donor App, visiting RedCrossBlood.org, calling 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or enabling the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device.

To encourage donations this holiday season, those who come to donate blood, platelets or plasma with the Red Cross from Dec. 18 to Jan. 4 will receive a long-sleeved Red Cross T-shirt, while supplies last.

As COVID-19 hospitalizations increase, hospital demand for convalescent plasma has also grown. COVID-19 convalescent plasma is a type of blood donation given by those who’ve recovered from this coronavirus. Their plasma contains antibodies that may help patients actively fighting the virus. Learn more about convalescent plasma and sign up to give at RedCrossBlood.org/Plasma4COVID.

The Red Cross is testing blood, platelet and plasma donations for COVID-19 antibodies. The test may indicate if the donor’s immune system has produced antibodies to this coronavirus, regardless of whether an individual developed COVID-19 symptoms. Red Cross antibody tests will be helpful to identify individuals who have COVID-19 antibodies and may now help current coronavirus patients in need of convalescent plasma transfusions. Convalescent plasma is a type of blood donation collected from COVID-19 survivors that have antibodies that may help patients who are actively fighting the virus.

COVID-19 antibody test results will be available within one to two weeks in the Red Cross Blood Donor App or donor portal at RedCrossBlood.org. A positive antibody test result does not con-

firm infection or immunity. The Red Cross is not testing donors to diagnose illness, referred to as a diagnostic test. To protect the health and safety of Red Cross staff and donors, it is important that individuals who do not feel well or believe they may be ill with COVID-19 postpone donation.

Each Red Cross blood drive and donation center follows the highest standards of safety and infection control, and additional precautions including temperature checks, social distancing and face coverings for donors and staff have been implemented to help protect the health of all those in attendance. Donors are asked to schedule an appointment prior to arriving at the drive and are required to wear a face covering or mask while at the drive, in alignment with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention public guidance.

Upcoming blood donation opportunities now to Jan. 4 at the Worcester Blood Donation Center, 381 Plantation St, Worcester. They include: Dec. 30 from noon-7:15 p.m.; Dec. 24, Dec. 26, Dec. 27, Dec. 31, Jan. 2, 2021 and Jan. 3, 2021 from 8:15 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.; Dec., 28 and 29 from noon-7:30 p.m.; Jan. 1, 2021 from 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and Jan. 4, 2021 from noon-7:30 p.m.

Simply download the American Red Cross Blood Donor App, visit RedCrossBlood.org, call 1-800-RED CROSS (1-800-733-2767) or enable the Blood Donor Skill on any Alexa Echo device to make an appointment or for more information. All blood types are needed to ensure a reliable supply for patients. A blood donor card or driver’s license or two other forms of identification are required at check-in. Individuals who are 17 years of age in most states (16 with parental consent where allowed by state law), weigh at least 110 pounds and are in generally good health may be eligible to donate blood. High school students and other donors 18 years of age and younger also have to meet certain height and weight requirements.

Blood and platelet donors can save time at their next donation by using RapidPass® to complete their pre-donation reading and health history questionnaire online, on the day of their donation, before arriving at the blood drive. To get started, follow the instructions at RedCrossBlood.org/RapidPass or use the Blood Donor App.

PAST PAGES

continued from page 4

and Mrs. George Sherback of High Bridge Road. Second prize was given to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas King of Ragged Hill Road. Mr. and Mrs. Chris Lester of Grimes Road were awarded third prize.

Evelyn Cronin, New Braintree, a senior at St. John’s College in Maryland, has received a


NEWS & FEATURES

As a paper of record, we attempt to cover all general news, personality profiles, and community features that we know about. This includes all selectmen and school committee meetings as well as spot planning board, board of health, finance, and other town meetings determined by the issue’s relevance to our readers. There are the annual major community event features that we should always cover, but we are more than open to suggestions of other features to celebrate the fabric of our communities and their many interesting occupants. Our loyal advertisers provide funding for this paid staff coverage.

For more information on news or community features for the Barre Gazette, please email edowner@turley.com.

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2006-2020
FOURTEEN YEAR MEMORY



David
Allen
Keans

A limb has fallen from my Family Tree.
I keep hearing a voice that says,
“Grieve not for me.”
Remember the best times, the
laughter, the song. The good life
I lived while I was strong.
Continue my heritage,
I’m counting on you.
Keep smiling and surely
the sun will shine through.
My mind is at ease, my
soul is at rest. Remembering
all how truly I was blessed.
I miss you dearly, so keep
up your chin. Until the day
comes and we’re together
once again.

We love and miss you.
Your Mother & Your Family

Barre Gazette
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Baystate provides COVID-19 vaccine Q & A

SPRINGFIELD — Now there is really something to celebrate this holiday season when it comes to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The CDC, after the FDA’s decision on Friday to grant emergency authorization for the coronavirus vaccine, has formally signed off on a recommendation from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices for Pfizer’s vaccine to be used in people 16 and older. The CDC recommendation comes after the FDA’s decision on Friday to grant emergency authorization for the vaccine.

However, most of the general public will have to wait until April to be vaccinated as health-care workers and those at risk are to receive the shot first.

“The COVID-19 vaccines hopefully can bring some normalcy back to our daily lives in the later part of next year, depending on how many will get vaccinated. We expect that at least in the short term, people will still need to continue to wear masks and follow social distancing. While the vaccine is shown to be very effective in preventing symptomatic infection, it is not 100% and is still unclear how much it can prevent asymptomatic infection that allows disease transmission,” said Dr. Armando Paez, chief, Infectious Disease Division, Baystate Health.

“With the current surge, the availability of vaccine will definitely help those vulnerable populations at risk of severe infection and death from COVID-19. There are still deaths occurring attributed to COVID-19 in Massachusetts, up to 60 in one day recently, although the cumulative deaths are not as high as during the first surge,” he added.

Still public support is split on the vaccine: 60 percent of people said they were likely to get the shot, a recent Pew poll found, while more than 20 percent were strongly opposed.

It is still unknown exactly how many people need to be vaccinated against or infected with COVID-19 to achieve “herd immunity,” noted Dr. Paez.

“Experts estimate it will be in the range of 70-80%. We know that within 90 days follow-

ing COVID-19 that reinfection is unlikely, however, reinfection has been reported after that. We do not know at this time for how long the vaccine will offer protection from COVID-19. Based on available data, the Pfizer vaccine is safe and very effective. Most side effects like injection site reaction, fatigue and headache resolve in one to two days. I believe one needs to look at the vaccine in the context of potential complications from COVID-19 illness compared to the side effects of the vaccine, then will realize how this vaccine can prevent serious illness for you and those around you,” he said.

The following Q&A will answer many of the questions you may have about the vaccine:

Q: Who will be first to get the Pfizer vaccine in Massachusetts.

A: Among those who will receive the vaccine first as part of “Phase One” are front-line health care workers and long-term care staff and residents. They will be followed by police, firefighters and emergency medical workers, home-based health workers and other “non-COVID facing” health workers, according to the state’s distribution plan. As for “Phase Two” priority groups, it will include residents with two or more chronic illnesses, essential workers such as teachers, transit employees and food, sanitation, public works and public health workers, according to the state’s priority list. After that will come adults who are 65 and over and individuals with one co-morbidity making them at higher risk for COVID-19. The vaccine will be available to the general public beginning in April as part of “Phase Three.”

Q: Where can I get the vaccine?

A: While details are still being worked out, according to Massachusetts state officials, the vaccine will be administered to patients at hospitals, community health centers and private medical offices. Pharmacies, including CVS, Walgreens, Walmart, and OSCO, will also have access to the vaccine and will be able to vaccinate their customers. And, officials say the vaccine “will likely also be made available to

local health departments for vaccinating their local residents at public clinics.” Massachusetts residents can check the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) interactive website, vaccinefinder.org, to see where a COVID-19 vaccine will be available at a public health clinic. For more information, people can also contact their primary health care provider, local pharmacy or local health department to see if, and when, they will have the vaccine available.

Q: Do the COVID-19 vaccines have side effects?

A: As with any medicine or vaccine, there will likely be some side effects with COVID vaccines. Based on data reported for the initial trials of both the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines in adults, there do not appear to be serious adverse events or safety issues related to these vaccines. Both Pfizer’s and Moderna’s vaccines do seem to cause mild or moderate side effects for up to 50% of people within the first few hours and days of both the first and second doses of each. These side effects include fever, headache, muscle aches, fatigue and soreness and/or redness at the site of injection in the arm. The CDC and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health will be closely monitoring reports and the latest news can be found on their websites. The CDC and the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are encouraging the public to report side effects through the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System.

Q: How effective is the vaccine?

A: So far, in trials that have involved tens of thousands of healthy adult volunteers, both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines show that they are 90-95% effective in preventing COVID-19 infection. It is still too early to know how long the effectiveness will last.

Q: Does the vaccine prevent transmission to others?

A: The vaccine will provide a 94 to 95% chance that you will not get COVID 19. However, it does not prevent transmission to others if you are already carrying the COVID-19 virus. You

may be spreading the virus without knowing it if you do not have symptoms. Therefore, it will still be necessary to wear a mask and practice social distancing even after getting the vaccine.

Q: Can I get infected from the COVID-19 vaccine?

A: No, it is not possible to get COVID-19 from vaccines. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use RNA that encodes the spike protein of the virus — not the “live” virus itself to stimulate immunity. None of the COVID-19 vaccines can cause COVID-19.

Q: Do I need to get the COVID-19 vaccine every year like the flu vaccine?

A: It is not known yet how often a COVID-19 vaccine will have to be administered.

Q: Will the COVID-19 vaccine be free?

A: Currently, there is no cost to get the vaccine.

Q: How will the vaccine be given?

A: Currently the vaccine will be an injection, the same way flu shots are given. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two injections. The Pfizer vaccine has been authorized for emergency use and this requires a second dose 21 days from the first dose. The Moderna vaccine, which is yet to be authorized by the FDA, will require a second dose 28 days after the first dose.

Q: If I had COVID-19, do I still need to get the vaccine?

A: Research is still being conducted on how and if the vaccine should be given to those who have already had the virus. Based on available data, the vaccine does not harm those who had COVID-19 when given. We do know that you should continue following safety guidelines, including wearing a mask and social distancing. As reinfection is less likely to happen to those people within 90 days of COVID-19, the Pfizer vaccine may be given only after 90 days since the diagnosis.

Q: Do I get to choose which brand of vaccine I receive?

A: At this time, the Pfizer vaccine is the only choice until another vaccine has been approved for emergency use by

the FDA. Eventually, when there are several different safe and effective vaccines available, there may be choices.

Q: Is there a minimum age to receive the vaccine?

A: Until recently, vaccine trials did not include children under the age of 16. Because of this, the Pfizer vaccine is only authorized for individuals 16 years and older. Pfizer has now included children 12 and older in current, ongoing trials. When the results for these trials become available in the future, there may be a change in vaccine recommendations.

Q: How long does it take for the vaccine to become effective?

A: It usually takes a few weeks after receiving the final course of a vaccine for the body to mount an effective immune response.

Q: Will people still have to wear a mask and social distance after getting the vaccine?

A: Yes. The current safety precautions will still be important including wearing masks and social distancing. Here are some reasons why:

As the vaccine rolls out, there will still be high levels of infection in our communities.

You will most likely need two doses of the vaccine in order to be highly protected. Available data show that only 52% respond to one dose of the Pfizer vaccine.

Even though you have been vaccinated, it is still not 100% effective, although close to it. It still unclear how much asymptomatic infection can be prevented by vaccination and thus the ability to transmit the virus if you get infected.

Q: What was the process of developing the vaccine?

A: All vaccines go through a similar testing process. Once products are created in the laboratory and show evidence of safety and effectiveness in animal models, they may proceed through a progressively escalating series of human clinical trials in volunteers. Progress to each “phase” of trials depends on success in the previous one. Phase I studies are small scale human trials designed to assess safety and appropriate dosing. Phase II trials are larger human studies that assess safe-

ty in more depth and laboratory measure of effectiveness.

Phase III trials are large clinical studies that seek to address safety and efficacy and are generally placebo-controlled studies, meaning that some volunteers get vaccine and some get a non-vaccine injection.

Q: What were the length of trials? How long were people followed after the vaccination?

A: The length of phase III vaccine trials, which are the large-scale ones to determine safety and effectiveness, is based generally on reaching enough “endpoints” to show that the virus is safe and working. The main “endpoint” is the number of COVID infections that occur in each group — (vaccine and control) and how the vaccine can prevent infection.


Q: What are the outcomes of the clinical trials?

A: The Pfizer clinical trials showed that the vaccine is 95% effective in preventing infection. No serious adverse events were noted in these trials.

Q: What are the vaccines made of and how do they work?

A: None of the COVID-19 vaccines in development in the U.S. use the “live” virus that causes COVID-19. Both the Pfizer and the Moderna vaccines rely on a new technology called mRNA, the synthetic messenger RNA (mRNA). While mRNA technology is new, it has been studied for more than a decade and the COVID-19 mRNA vaccines have been carefully tested for safety. Not all vaccines work the same way. Most commonly, vaccines are made from inactivated viruses or weakened live viruses. Vaccines use antigens (substances that prompt immune responses) to train the immune system to identify threats and produce antibodies. The COVID-19 vaccines being tested by Pfizer and Moderna use the mRNA that code proteins using the host cells’ own protein-making process to make proteins, trigger an immune response and build immunity to SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19).


For more information on Baystate Health, people may visit baystatehealth.org.



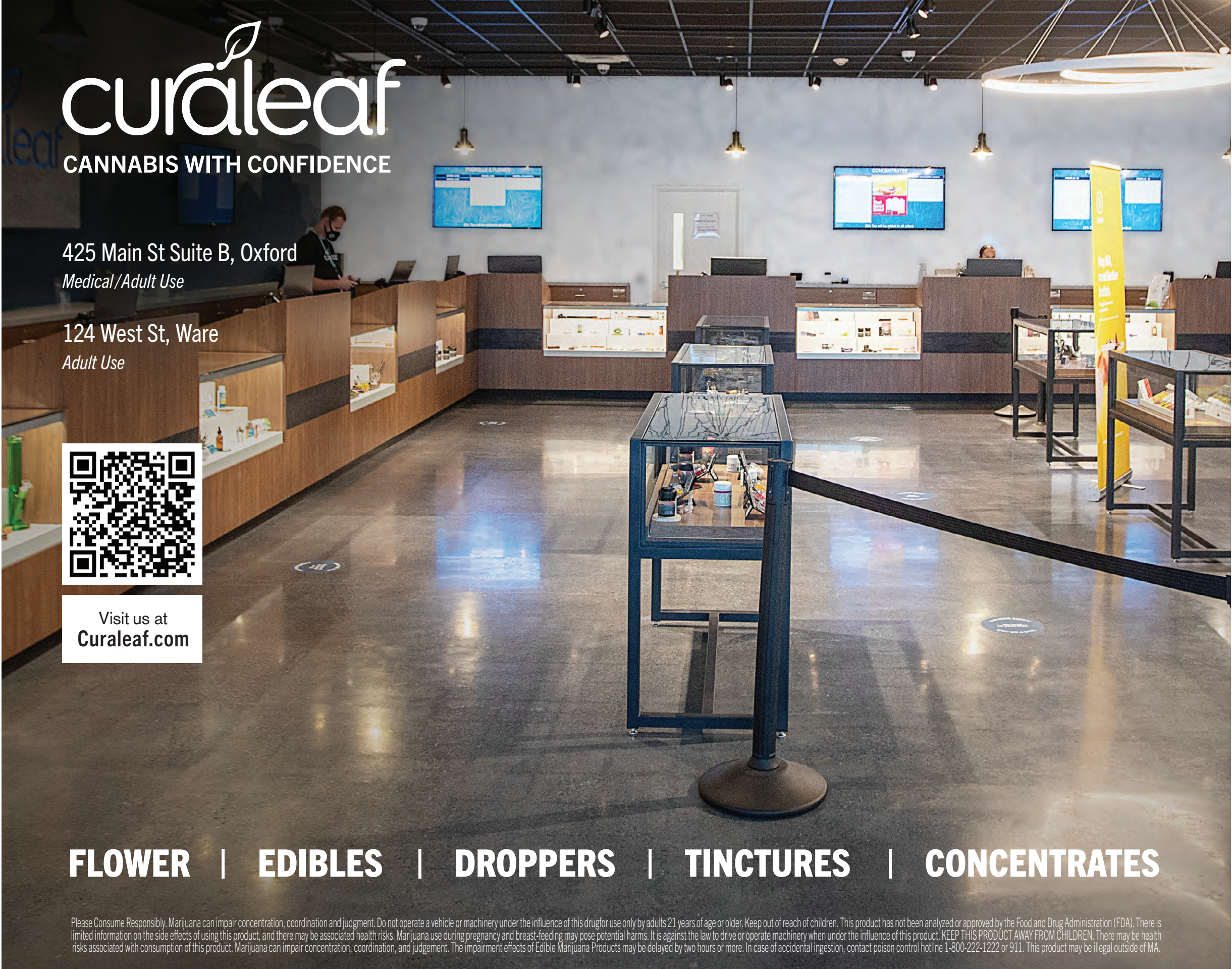
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Baystate offers COVID holiday precautions

SPRINGFIELD – “The risks of contracting the coronavirus leading up to Christmas and afterwards are even greater than they were for Thanksgiving because of all the traveling, shopping and parties associated with the holidays,” said Dr. Armando Paez, chief, Infectious Disease Division, Baystate Medical Center.

“The greatest gift you can give someone this holiday season is to protect them from getting the virus,” he added.

Dr. Paez noted that the world has already been gifted with an early present, several vaccines to fight the coronavirus.

“While we expect great promise from these vaccines, the difference they will make in our return to some semblance of normality will not be felt until sometime next year, perhaps not until

mid-year or the fall season,” he said.

Yet, despite the good news about the vaccine, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is forecasting that there could be an estimated 9,500 to 19,500 deaths the week of Christmas alone.

But, once again as they did for Thanksgiving, the CDC is advising against travel for the upcoming winter holidays, including Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa and Las Posadas.

“Travel may increase your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19. Staying home is the best way to protect yourself and others,” cites the CDC as cases are rising, hospitalizations are increasing and deaths are increasing.

For those who must travel, the CDC recommends being tested

for COVID-19 before and after their trip. They advise getting a test one to three days before travel and another three to five days after travel, as well as reducing nonessential activities for seven days after travel. And for

those who do not get tested, the CDC recommends reducing nonessential activities for 10 days after travel.

The message hasn’t changed much when it comes to partying for Christmas, whether in someone’s home or at the office, if people must, the smaller the better and outdoors if possible (not always possible in New England). And, of course, if people do party, wear a mask and socially distance, noted Dr. Paez.

In Massachusetts, according to an order from Gov. Charlie Baker, indoor gatherings at private residences

are limited to 10 people and outdoor gatherings at private residences are limited to 25 people.

“To be honest, it’s going to be hard to socially distance in a party atmosphere and enjoy it at this same time. Also, If just one person isn’t wearing a mask, that’s a problem. And, where alcohol is involved, you’re much more likely to let your guard down where safety is concerned,” said Dr. Paez.

As for celebrations with family and friends, the CDC says the safest way to celebrate the holidays is “at home with people you live with.”

Visit the CDC’s website, cdc.gov, for a full article on “Holiday Celebrations and Small Gatherings,” which explains the risks of holidays gatherings and offers tips on how to stay safe.

As Thanksgiving approached,

the CDC recommended not going shopping in crowded stores, a suggestion which still stands as coronavirus surges are even greater now than around Thanksgiving.

Also, the White House COVID-19 Task Force recently noted the country is “at a very dangerous place and the COVID risk to all Americans is at an all-time high,” stating “everyone over 65 with significant health conditions should avoid public places if possible and wear a mask when leaving the house.”

“As much as possible, use curbside pickup if shopping or shop online,” said Dr. Paez.

“These are hard decisions to make around the holidays at a time when family is everything and getting together is so important. But, there is light at the end of the tunnel thanks to the vaccines we are now seeing, and the

sacrifices we make this year can keep everyone safe until we can all be together once again next year,” added Dr. Paez.

Whatever way people choose to celebrate the holidays, Dr. Paez reminds everyone to follow some commonsense safety precautions that public health experts have been recommending since the start of the pandemic to keep you and others safe from COVID-19: wear a mask, social distance staying at least six feet apart from anyone not in your household, wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth and don’t go out when feeling sick and avoid contact with those, who are sick. For more information on Baystate Health, people may visit baystatehealth.org.

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VIRUS OVERVIEW, continued from page 1

When asked about an evolved version of the virus recently found in England, Harvey said that’s what viruses do, they involve, and often become more infectious. However, with the increase in its infectiousness, the virus usually doesn’t become deadly, she said, and expects this coronavirus to be no different.

Schools

Harvey said she expects vaccines will be offered in the spring and summer, but the vaccines are not for children under 18 as of yet. “I expect next fall to be a much more normal school year.” She also expects the rest of the school year will remain in the hybrid model, with a couple of days in-person and the remainder through remote learning. She said it was probably unrealistic to expect schools could return to a full in-person schools this school year.

Although vaccines are becoming available, she said all safety measures must stay in place to reduce the spread, including mask wearing, six-foot distancing and having adequate ventilation. She said it is thought that there is not a lot of spreading through surfaces.

She said children are less likely to develop COVID-19, and if they do, they usually have a less severe case compared to adults. Children often have no symptoms or very mild symptoms.

When asked about herd immunity, Harvey said it means when a large enough percentage of the population has immunity against the virus.

She pointed to measles, which has about a 90% immunity rate these days, and to have immunity from COVID-19, 70 to 75% of the population would have to be immune for the cases to decrease.

Harvey also said it is clear that it has been harmful for students to not be in school. “It isn’t clear if that’s from the anxiety of living in the a pandemic,” she said, or being out of school without the fun of socialization. She also said students are experiencing more anxiety and depression, as are adults.

She said the only way to really stop the virus is by frequent testing of once or twice week, and then following up with contract tracing. It’s an expensive proposition to do that testing, which is why it is mostly private schools and colleges that can afford to carry it out.

She was optimistic that “science helped save the day.” “I feel very hopeful that by February we’ll be coming down the other side,” Harvey said.

GIVING, continued from page 1

she got online. An advent calendar usually has twenty-four windows to open that reveal a Christmas scene each day from December 1 - 24. However, Brenda filled a large shopping bag with food items as suggested on the Internet, and she had fun doing it.

Dec. 1 -- box of cereal
Dec. 2 -- peanut butter
Dec. 3 -- stuffing mix
Dec. 4 -- instant potatoes
Dec. 5 -- macaroni and cheese
Dec. 6 -- canned fruit
Dec. 7 -- canned tomatoes
Dec. 8 -- canned tuna
Dec. 9 -- dessert mix
Dec. 10 -- jar of applesauce
Dec. 11 -- canned potatoes
Dec. 12 -- cranberry sauce

Dec. 13 -- can of beans
Dec. 14 -- box of crackers
Dec. 15 -- package of rice
Dec. 16 -- package of pasta
Dec. 17 -- spaghetti sauce
Dec. 18 -- chicken noodle soup
Dec. 19 -- tomato soup
Dec. 20 -- can of corn
Dec. 21 -- can of mixed vegetables
Dec. 22 -- can of carrots
Dec. 23 -- can of green beans
Dec. 24 -- oatmeal

Her Advent Calendar bag of food is among the missionary gifts to be delivered this year. What a pleasant surprise the lucky family will receive!

GARIEPY, continued from page 4

Personal contact is lost. It feels so unfriendly, so unnatural, to meet up with a friend, back away and converse loudly at a safe distance. How we long to move closer together and visit. Hugs are lost and that is what I miss the most. Hugs, from my family, hugs from my friends, the feeling of intimacy and caring for each other. I have a granddaughter, who gives the most wonderful hugs, long hugs, ones that transmit love, hugs that make me feel like I melt into her loving arms. I call them “Phoebe hugs.” I think the precautions we have to take remove a piece of love from our lives. We know the love is there, but we can no longer physically feel it, a feeling we long for.

We have to be patient and feel it virtually. I close my eyes and bring in a Phoebe hug. It can be compared to the faith it takes to walk with God. We don’t see Him, but know he’s there. Faith brings comfort. I’m thankful.

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Soccer changes affected approach to game

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

REGION—The MIAA made several rule changes to the sport of soccer this past fall due to COVID-19.

It took a couple of matches for the players, coaches, and referees to get used to the new modified rules.

"It did take some time for the players to get used to the new rules. We're hoping to go back to soccer without modifications next year," said Monson girls' varsity soccer coach Eric Degnan. "The players deserve a lot of credit. You also have to give the referees a lot of credit as well. It wasn't very easy for them either."

Granby girls varsity soccer coach Robert Weaver was happy his players had the opportunity to play some matches this fall.

"The girls were very happy just to be getting together, practicing and playing soccer while following the modifications," Weaver said. "At Granby, we had great backing from the school's administration, school committee, and health department."

One of the rule changes was the elimination of throw-ins. When the ball crossed the touchline, the restart was a kick-in, which was the same as an indirect kick. The ball was placed on the spot on the touchline where the ball went out of



Girls soccer adjusted to the modified rules of soccer, which included no throw-ins and goalies could not punt over the half line.

bounds or behind it.

Ludlow boys' varsity soccer coach Greg Kolodziey really didn't mind the elimination of throw-ins.

"We have benefitted over the years from having a player who could throw it far," Kolodziey said. "You could create more scoring chances on more restarts with the kick-in."

There were also no head balls allowed.

"I think the rule change that

affected the game the most was elimination of head balls. I've never seen so many well-executed shoulder balls in my life," Kolodziey added. "But there were a lot of good scoring chances missed by all the teams due to not being allowed to head the ball."

Players were not allowed to make intentional physical contact with an opposing player.

"We always stress the importance of not committing reckless



File photos

Boys soccer had to do without head balls, a big part of the attack game.

and needless fouls," Kolodziey said. "If the health situation is under control, I do think all the modified rules will be changed back next season."

Goalkeepers weren't allowed to kick, punt dropkick, or throw the ball in the air beyond the midfield line.

If the ball did travel in the air beyond the midfield line without touching a player, the resulting restart was an indirect kick

for the opposing team from the spot it crossed midfield. "I strongly disliked the rule where the goalie could not punt, or goal kick the ball over half," said Ware boys varsity soccer coach Jesse Trzpit "To me, it didn't make a lot of sense to begin with, I didn't see how it benefitted anyone's safety and it also took a large advantage away from our team. Our starting

See SOCCER page 10

Pathfinder approved for winter sports, but lack home court

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

PALMER—After dealing with no COVID-19 related issues during the recently completed fall sports season, the athletic department at Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School is planning on having a winter sports season.

"All of our student-athletes were very excited to get back on the field again this fall with their friends and coaches," said Pathfinder Athletic Director Joe Baldyga during the school committee meeting held on December 16. "We did manage to get through the fall season without any COVID related incidents regarding athletics."

Following a lengthy discussion, the Pathfinder school committee did pass a motion to allow the winter sports season to go on as scheduled.

The Pioneers boys' and girls' basketball teams are scheduled to play about ten games against

neighboring high schools. However, none of those games will be taking place inside the Pathfinder gymnasium, which is currently being used as a cafeteria.

"It would be very difficult for us to host any basketball games due to the circumstances our gym is in right now," Baldyga said. "We're planning on playing games at our opponent's gyms. We'll also be holding practices at outside venues."

Wrestling is normally another winter sport held at Pathfinder, but that sport was moved by the MIAA to the newly created Fall II season.

A committee member did ask Baldyga about the possibility of moving basketball to the Fall II season, which is slated to run from late February until the end of April.

"Most high schools in the area are trying to get the winter sports season in during the traditional winter season," Baldyga said. "The MIAA had move wrestling to Fall II. If we also moved bas-

ketball to that season, I'm not sure there would be any teams for us to compete against at that point. We would need three or four other schools to compete against during the Fall II season."

The first practice of the high school basketball season is scheduled to take place on January 11. The season is slated to end on March 1 without a postseason tournament being held.

"It'll be about half of a regular basketball season," Baldyga added. "We'll also be playing opponents similar to those our soccer teams played in the fall."

The teams in the Pathfinder basketball bubble are scheduled to be Palmer, Ware, Monson, and Hampden Charter.

The Lady Pioneers, who are coached by Kevin Aldrich, finished with a 12-9 overall record a year ago. Their season came to an end following a loss at Franklin Tech in a Western Mass. Division 4 tournament. The girls' varsity

See PATHFINDER page 10

Claremont to host Granite Pro Stock Series

WALPOLE, N.H. -- Granite State Pro Stock Series officials announced on Thursday a 15-race schedule for the 2021 race season. The slate will bring drivers to three different New England states -- while visiting eight different tracks in one of the most complete schedules the series has ever offered for teams and fans.

The calendar is headlined by the annual Newport Chevrolet 150 at Claremont Motorsports Park, this time on Saturday, July 31 -- a \$10,000 to win show that is sure to draw the top Super Late Model talent in the region. The series will also make a debut at one of New England's most historic tracks and return to multiple staple facilities, with a mix of flat and banked tracks planned.

"We're thrilled with the way our schedule came together for the 2021 season," Mike Parks, president of the Granite State Pro Stock Series, said. "We always strive to get 14-16 races and we were able to accomplish it again. We think our competitors and fans will enjoy it."

The season starts with the big debut in Connecticut. Granite State teams will compete at Stafford Motor Speedway for the first time as part of the annual NAPA Spring Sizzler weekend on Saturday, April 24 -- a one-day show. Pro Stocks are no stranger to the Arute-owned facility -- having run as a weekly division for decades -- but now, the touring stars will invade to compete with some of the local talent that are sure to find themselves a ride.

"To say we are thrilled to finally bring the Granite State Pro Stock Series to Stafford would be an understatement," Parks said. "This will be the icing on the cake to kick-off the Greatest Race in the History of the Spring, the annual NAPA Spring Sizzler. It's going to be an amazing event for our series and the track both."

Following Stafford, just one week later, Monadnock Speedway will host their first of two series events on Sunday afternoon, May 2 as part of their season-opening

See RACING page 13

T-Birds announce massive teddy bear donation

SPRINGFIELD -- The Springfield Thunderbirds' Foundation is pleased to announce a donation of over 1,000 teddy bears and stuffed animals to local charitable partners, the culmination of a successful Drive-Thru Teddy Bear Toss presented by Teddy Bear Pools & Spas, that was held on Saturday, Dec. 12 outside of the MassMutual Center in downtown Springfield.

This morning, the Thunderbirds' mascot Boomer, along with staff members, made deliveries of hundreds of stuffed animals to Square One, Center for Human Development (CHD), Boys and Girls Club of Springfield, and the Boys & Girls Club, Family Center in Springfield.

"Our holiday celebrations are looking much different this year, but the Springfield Thunderbirds have proven that with a bit of creativity and careful planning, the children in our community can still experience the magic of the season," says Kristine Allard, Vice President of Development & Communications, Square One. "We are so grateful to Nate Costa and the entire Thunderbirds



Despite the pandemic conditions, the Springfield Thunderbirds still held its annual teddy bear drive.

community for keeping the tradition of the Teddy Bear Toss alive. Our children will be overjoyed!"

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the annual Teddy Bear Toss event was much different than previous years. Instead of tossing the bears onto the ice after the first T-Birds first goal during a home game in December, fans brought

their new teddy bears or stuffed animals down and 'tossed' them out of their vehicles as part of the Drive-Thru Teddy Bear Toss at the MassMutual Center on the corner of Main St. and Bruce Landon Way. Boomer, the Nicebox Icebox, and front office staff were present to collect donations and properly package and sanitize them. Those



Submitted photos

The Thunderbirds mascot tosses a teddy bear from a donor's car.

that couldn't make it that day also donated at the Thunderbirds office, at Teddy Bear Pools & Spas in Chicopee, the Springfield Visitor Center, or at New Valley Bank's new headquarters located in Monarch Place in downtown Springfield.

"The T-Birds and their loyal fans have again stepped up to

bring holiday joy to children and families receiving services in CHD programs across western Massachusetts," said Ben Craft, CHD's Vice President of Community Engagement. "We deeply appreciate the Thunderbirds organization's partnership and

See T-BIRDS page 13

Several unknowns for winter sports season

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

REGION -- In Western Massachusetts, winter sports are scheduled to begin in early January, but that is pending the creation of a new schedule and the Pioneer Valley Interscholastic Athletic Conference forming geographic "bubble" leagues for basketball and hockey, as well as swimming.

In November, the PVIAC agreed to go ahead with winter sports, but made a number of rulings:

- Compete in a bubble that will limit contact with fewer athletes (schools).

- Start date for winter sports January 4, 2021 through February 20, 2021

- The scheduled amount of games will be: Team sports (Basketball, Swimming, Ice Hockey) 10-12 Skiing 5-6 contest

- No independent varsity contests, only those given by schedulers.

- Spectators for Indoor Games TBD.

- Out of season coaching: There will be no out of season coaching during the Winter Season

- Strongly recommend no captains practices.

With the recent rollout of a vaccine as well as a second one now in the pipeline that could accelerate the vaccination process, it is unclear if decisions made about fans will be revisited at some point.

Another decision that must be made is what schools will be participating in the winter season.

Changes that have already been made for the season include the addition of Southwick to the winter ranks. Southwick's school committee did not allow the school to participate in the fall season, but has agreed to support the winter season. Southwick has boys and girls basketball as well as ice hockey.

Belchertown, while it will

See WINTER SPORTS, page 10

Senior photos from fall season wanted

By Gregory A. Scibelli
gscibelli@turley.com

The fall season is nearing its end and Turley Publications has been all over the action.

But with this unpredictable season there have been temporary or in some cases, permanent stoppages in play, and we still want to help feature your athletes, especially those who are seniors this year.

We continue to ask for help on this season in order to bring the best coverage we can possibly manage and fill our pages with names and color.

We know that fans will be limited to the home crowds, but that is where you all come in.

If you attended any senior games and would like to see those photos in our papers, we welcome submitted photos from those events and information about graduating seniors who participated in Fall 1 sports.

We also welcome any additional information about other major achievements. Send any and all information and photos for inclusion to sports@turley.com.

Education

Local students honored at virtual commencement ceremonies

FITCHBURG — Fitchburg State University celebrated the achievements of the Class of 2020 at virtual commencement ceremonies Dec. 17 and 18.

The virtual ceremonies included remarks from the corresponding undergraduate valedictorians from May and December, as well as the recipients of the Graduate Student Leadership Award for each semester. University President Richard S. Lapidus delivered the keynote commencement address at each ceremony.

Local students graduating for the fall of 2020 include: Tricia C. Andriski, MBA, Business Administration, from Barre; Holly M. Beal Muldoon, MBA, Business Administration, Samantha A. Coons, MED, Special Education, Tyler H. Frati, MS, Criminal Justice, Stephanie L. Fuller, BS, Interdisciplinary Studies and Lisa M. Schiegel, MBA, Business Administration, all of Hubbardston; Samuel J. Arcikowski, BS, Industrial Technology, of Oakham and Sarah G. Trudeau, BS, Communications Media, of Rutland.

“We are honored to recognize the singular accomplishments of these graduates, who have completed their degrees despite unprecedented challenges,” Lapidus said. “Every university graduate must balance the demands of their stud-

ies and external factors, but the Class of 2020 had to contend with all of those as well as a global pandemic. They truly embody the university’s motto of ‘perseverance,’ and we are proud to honor them.”

For the May 2020 ceremony, Valedictorian Stanley L. Choruzek (Computer Information Systems) of Lancaster will deliver remarks, as will Graduate Student Leadership Award recipient Paul A. Thibodeau (Master of Science in Counseling) of Royalston.

For the December 2020 ceremony, Valedictorian Caroline Anderson (Environmental and Earth Science) of Lunenburg will deliver remarks, as will Graduate Student Leadership Award recipient Michelle A. Tilden (Master of Education in Occupational Education) of West Wareham.

Additional details about the ceremonies, as well as links to watch the proceedings, will be posted at fitchburgstate.edu/commencement.

The Class of 2020 Honorees
May 2020 Valedictorian Stanley L. Choruzek
Stanley L. Choruzek is a U.S. Marine Corps veteran who enlisted as soon as he was old enough in order to join the War on Terror. When an injury during training kept him from being deployed, he turned his attention to being a full-time father while earning a college degree. He began studying liberal

arts and appreciated the foundation of critical thinking it fostered.

The Worcester native graduated from Mount Wachusett Community College in 2017 and then attended Fitchburg State. In addition to his studies, he worked on campus for Information Technology. He also appreciated the diversity of students he met on campus, including fellow veterans.

Looking ahead, Choruzek sees parallels in the computer networks he helped support and the human networks that sustain all of us.

Choruzek hopes to transfer his new degree in computer information systems into a career in cybersecurity. His drive to serve and protect his fellow citizens has led him to the virtual front lines, where hackers try to interfere with social networks or elections.

May 2020 Graduate Student Leadership Award Winner Paul A. Thibodeau
Paul A. Thibodeau has faced many challenges in his life but still considers his a blessed existence. After years of drug and alcohol addiction, Thibodeau got sober 25 years ago and is now committed to helping others overcome their own challenges.

After completing his undergraduate degree in human services from Fitchburg State in 2015, Thibodeau continued his studies at the graduate level in the hopes of building a

career in counseling. Those plans were interrupted after a horrific car crash in 2017 that shattered his femur and left him with a traumatic brain injury.

Despite those challenges, Thibodeau considers his a blessed life. He believes he has survived so that he can help others overcome their own adversities.

In nominating Thibodeau for the graduate award, faculty members saluted his resilience and his commitment to continuing his studies, despite the challenges created by the accident - including delaying his graduation by a full year.

Thibodeau now works as a counselor for the Montachusett Opportunity Council and looks forward to getting his own license to practice on his own.

December 2020 Valedictorian Caroline Anderson
Caroline Anderson is graduating with a perfect 4.0 grade point average and a record of significant scholarship and academic achievement at Fitchburg State University.

Anderson’s passion for the world around her is reflected in her major of environmental and earth science with a minor in chemistry. She has a deep interest in climate change and its impacts on the ocean.

As an undergraduate, Anderson was among the first cohort of students to participate in a grant-fund-

ed summer research program in which she worked with peers and faculty members on projects related to the local environmental and community health. The following summer, Anderson returned to the program as a peer mentor to the second cohort of researchers.

She has presented original research at conferences across the U.S. and in Puerto Rico, and interned with Professor Jane Huang on a project for the Worcester County Overdose Death Response Initiative Project, an effort begun by the Worcester District Attorney’s Office in response to the opioid crisis.

Anderson was also the valedictorian of her graduating class at St. Bernard’s Catholic High School in Fitchburg, where she was awarded the Rensselaer Medal for excellence in math and science.

Following graduation, Anderson is pursuing graduate school to continue her studies in oceanography.

December 2020 Graduate Student Leadership Award Winner Michelle A. Tilden
Michelle A. Tilden is a career educator, having worked with diverse learners for nearly 30 years. Since 2002, she has taught early education at Tri-County Regional Vocational Technical High School in Franklin, where her students are training for employment in the field of human ser-

vices.

Like many graduate students, Tilden had to balance personal and professional challenges with her scholastic demands. She overcame these hardships to complete her degree and graduates with a Master of Education in Occupational Education.

In being nominated for this award, Tilden’s advisor cited numerous contributions to her field, including bringing students to the national SkillsUSA conference where they won 4th place. The experience led her to be one of the lead advisors for many years. She continues to coach individual and teams of students from the early education program.

At her school, Tilden has shown herself to be a leader through service on numerous committees and training projects. She is the vocational representative for a team of teachers and administrators who work together on bettering the educator evaluation process in their district. The stated vision for this evaluation process is to embrace a collaborative coaching model of evaluation with an emphasis on reflective practices to promote individual and school development and growth, recognizing individual strengths and contributions consistent with continuous school improvement and the school’s core values.

St. Aloysius Catholic School releases honor roll

GILBERTVILLE – St. Aloysius Catholic School released its honor roll for the first quarter. The following students received high honors or honors.

High honors
Anthony Adams
Eden Fanelli
Hannah Fanelli
Mary-Kate Pacek

Honors
Sophia Adams
Anthony Araujo
Madison Clough
Hannah LaRochelle
Andrew Letendre
Joseph Pacek
Alex St. Jacques
Lucas Skoczylas

Emma Wilbur makes president’s list

PLYMOUTH, N.H. – Emma Wilbur of Barre, has been named to the Plymouth State University president’s list for the fall 2020 semester. To be named to the president’s list, a student must achieve a grade

point average of 3.7 or better for the fall 2020 semester and must have attempted at least 12 credit hours during the semester. Wilbur is a fine arts major at Plymouth State University.

QCC offers Credit for Prior Learning Program

WORCESTER — At Quinsigamond Community College, students are attaining their dreams for a higher education in less time through Credits for Prior Learning. By earning credit for life experience, students save time earning their degrees, as well as realize substantial tuition savings. In 2020, 1,472 credits were awarded to 310 students.

QCC’s Career Services and Credit for Prior Learning Office works with students to assist them in translating their life experiences into college credits. Students may earn college credit for acquired life experience in a variety of ways that include taking a challenge exam, having portfolio assessments or through credentialing of prior certificates and trainings

such as military service, firefighting academy and emergency medical technician training. Credit for Prior Learning offers a significant savings over QCC’s already affordable tuition rates. The program offers a savings of between \$130-\$205 per credit.

President Luis G. Pedraja, Ph.D. noted that these types of savings are extremely beneficial, particularly during a pandemic when many students are struggling to make ends meet.

“While financial concerns may be exacerbated by the pandemic, credit for prior learning not only offers a way for students to save money, but also enables them to graduate earlier and enter the workforce sooner with less debt,” he said.

Student veteran Javier Viera spent 30 years serving in the Army before coming to QCC. During his first 12 years in the Army he worked as a combat engineer and the last 18 years as an Army recruiter. Viera was awarded 69 credits for prior learning, of which he used 35 credits for a human services degree.

As a former Army recruiter, Viera said he has always promoted and was aware of credit for prior learning, however, “... seeing it applied when I came to QCC was a great surprise,” he said.

Viera said that while he could have used the majority of his awarded credits for a general studies degree, he chose instead to use all applicable credits toward the human service

degree he really wanted. His plan is to graduate from QCC in Fall 2021 and then work with veterans.

“I can’t say I wasn’t tempted to go for a general studies degrees,” he said. “The applicability of my military time for credits blew me out of the water.”

“The Credit for Prior Learning program is a great way for students to take advantage of the knowledge they’ve gained over the years and have it pay off in a lucrative way,” Dr. Pedraja added.

To learn more, people may visit Credit for Prior Learning. For more information about QCC, people may contact Josh Martin, director of institutional communications at 508-854-7513 or jmartin@qcc.mass.edu.

MWCC receives grant funding to expand College access to Winchendon residents

GARDNER – Mount Wachusett Community College announces it has been granted additional funding from the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation, Inc. to expand its skill-building workshops for Winchendon

adults, particularly those who have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic through job loss or other economic hardship.

The Robinson Broadhurst Foundation, Inc. support will enable MWCC to offer a free, virtual workshopseries, the Adult College Experience (ACE), is designed to guide adult learners through the steps of applying for college and financial aid, selecting courses, managing coursework and balancing school with work and family life. Participants attending all four workshops will be eligible to win a free, three-credit course provided by the

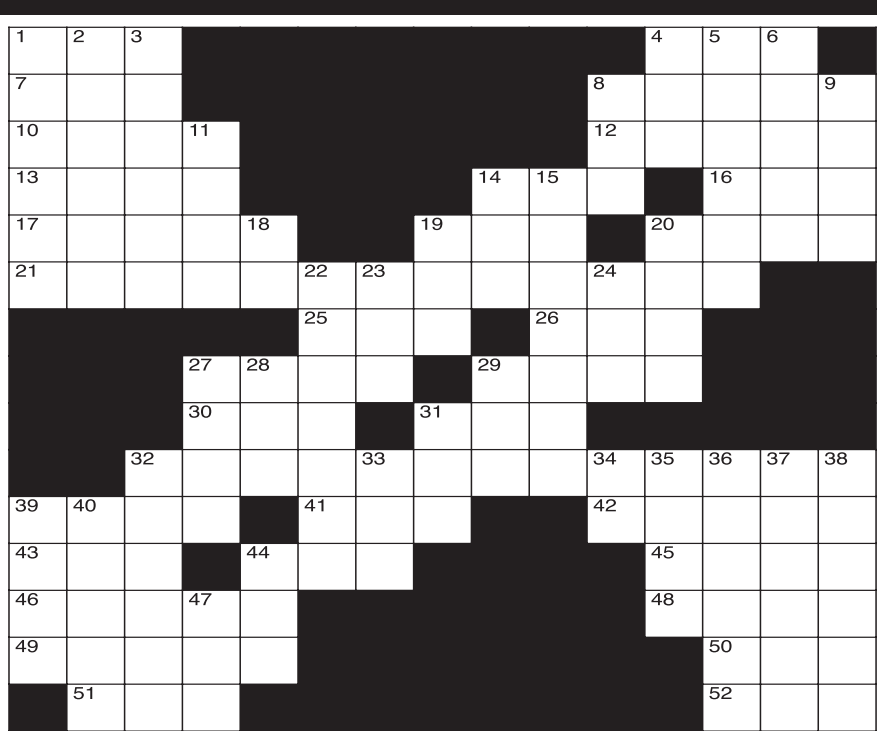
college.

Each year, millions of adult students return to college to expand their career options, change careers, or fulfill a long-held dream of earning a degree. “We developed the ACE program toprovide students with a roadmap to follow to make their transition to higher education as seamless as possible,” said Marcia Rosbury-Henne, Dean of Enrollment Management and Admissions.

The ACE sessions are geared toward adults over 25 years old. Participants will attend a number of workshops over the course of the program covering topics

including “College for Adults,” “Navigating the ‘Net for Career Success” and “Foundations for Success.” MWCC anticipates enrolling 30 adults in the program, providing them with the skills and tools they need to successfully enroll and complete a degree or certificate program and find new employment.

“We are continually grateful for the support of the Robinson Broadhurst Foundation and look forward to doing our part to continue their mission to improve the lives of Winchendon residents,” remarked MWCC President James Vander Hooven.



CLUES ACROSS

- Crow species
- Partner to flow
- Male offspring
- Sedate
- Orange beverage
- Pair of small hand drums
- 12th month of Jewish civil year
- Former Pirates star Jason
- Computer company
- Made angry
- Beverage container
- Charlize Theron film “___ Flux”
- Localities
- Consume
- Don’t know when yet
- Bed style
- Make a low,

continuous sound

- Wrath
- Pollinates flowers
- Association
- Prejudice
- Unhealthy
- Hasidic religious leader
- Distinctive philosophy
- Short-term memory
- In a good way
- Emperors of Ethiopia
- Imaginary line
- Of barium
- One’s sense of self-esteem
- Man who behaves dishonorably
- Monetary unit

CLUES DOWN

- Rear of (nautical)
- He minds the net
- Ring-shaped objects
- When you hope to get there
- Young children
- Beloved hobbit
- Pigpen
- Wish harm upon (Scottish)
- Scrooge’s phrase “___ Humbug”
- One more
- A ballplayer who only hits
- Once vital TV part
- Sixth month of Jewish civil year
- Advantage
- Type of tree
- Luke’s mentor ___-Wan
- Life stories
- Vase
- Tiny
- Package (abbr.)
- A photog’s tool
- Wood
- One of the six noble gases (abbr.)
- Pueblo people of New Mexico
- Wild goats
- A way to comply
- Horatio ___, British admiral
- Actress Leslie
- Sir ___ Newton
- Pouch
- Have already done

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THE SUN
WILBRAHAM-HAMPDEN TIMES
TOWN REMINDER
WARE RIVER NEWS

SOCCER, continued from page 9

goalie consistently kicks the ball over half which gives us an opportunity to move the ball up field more so than other ways. Our backup goalie also has the ability to do this.”

All of the high school soccer matches were played in four ten-minute quarters instead of two twenty minutes halves.

A couple of the other rule changes were corner kicks were indirect kicks, no timeouts will be allowed, and there were no rebounds allowed on penalty kicks. Coaches, players and referees wore masks during the game.

Everyone is hoping to have a normal high school soccer season in the fall of 2021.

WINTER SPORTS, continued from page 9

allow swimming and basketball, hockey is not being allowed due to the fact the UMass practice rink, their home ice, is not available. Belchertown’s school committee confirmed other options for Belchertown would be in communities that currently in the red status for being labeled “high-risk” for COVID-19 spread. Belchertown is one of the towns not allowed to play other schools that have the red designation.

Holyoke High School, which ceased its fall season on Oct. 21, is set to participate in the winter season with basketball and swimming, but can only do so if it gets out of the red by Dec. 24 and remains out of the red until the season starts in

PATHFINDER, continued from page 9

hoop team did squeak out an exciting 36-35 home win over Hampden Charter last January. They didn’t face either Palmer, Monson, or Ware.

The Pathfinder boys’ varsity basketball squad, who’s coached by David Oliveira, won a total of seven games last winter. They did face Monson twice and Hampden Charter once, which were all losses.

Just like during the soccer season, all of the players, coaches, and referees will be required to wear masks on the court. The players

will also have to wear them on the bench, but a mask free area will be set-up in each gymnasium. The spectators, who will mainly be the home team parents, will also have to wear masks.

“We’re going to try to do everything that we can do to keep our players and coaches as safe as possible Baldyga said. “We do follow a daily protocol list and the MIAA has also made several rule modifications this year.”

There won’t be a jump ball held at the start of the game or overtime. A coin toss will determine which team will get the ball first.

When a player inbounds the

ball, the closet defender will be six feet away. No player will be allowed to inbound the ball on the baseline.

There will be no halftime. The breaks at the end of each quarter will last 2:30. Timeouts will be 1:15 each.

Teams will not be allowed to have more than 15 players and no more than three coaches on a bench for a game.

Things will probably be changing on a daily basis just like they have since last March, but the members of the Pathfinder boys’ and girls’ basketball teams are hoping to play some games this winter.

ANSWERS ON PAGE 15



Colter William Goddard

August 4, 2020

Parents: Jackie and Nate Goddard, Gilbertville
Grandparents: Chris Greene and Bill Cole, Hardwick,
 Shelly and Bill Goddard, Orwell, VT

Charlotte Hubacz

March 23, 2020

Parents: April and Ross Hubacz, North Brookfield
Grandparents: Ann Tyler, North Brookfield
 Paul and Debbie Hubacz, North Brookfield
 Don Gillette and Tracey Davenport, North Brookfield

Isaiah Burrill

January 26, 2020

Parents: Ede Salvadore-Burrill and William Burrill, Quincy
Grandparents: Tony and Laurie Salvadore, Barre
 Jeannine and James Kelley, New Hampshire
 David and Rita Burrill, Maine, William Goodwin, Charlestown



Best and
brightest
wishes
to you and
yours at this
special time!

QUABBIN AUTO REPAIR

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From our home to yours, warmest
wishes for a sweet season.

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ADVANTAGE 1**
 www.thedonnawarfieldteam.com

THE DONNA WARFIELD TEAM

Donna M. Warfield
 508-479-1407
 donnawarfield99@gmail.com



Kimberly Clark
 978-906-1503
 kimberlyclark1@remax.net

Merry Christmas to All ...and many thanks to all of the valued customers who pulled for us this year!
 We appreciate your incredible support.

CHUCK'S CIVIC CENTER

60 Worcester Road, Barre • 978-355-0010

A Merry Little Wish

Hope your holiday is the complete package!
 Thanks for making our year so much fun.

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 Barre • cell: 978.257.4136
 info@customcakesbyamanda.com

Thanks & Best Wishes All Around

It's friends and customers like all of you who make our season bright!

DANDELIONS

34 Fruitland Rd. (off Route 122), Barre
 978-257-8064

Ho-Ho-Hope It's Happy!

Best wishes and many thanks to our dear friends and customers at Christmastime.

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7 Exchange Street, Barre • 978-355-2210
 www.brucecoffincpa.com

Merry Christmas

Resounding thanks to everyone who helped make our year so special!

J.C. POOLS INC.

108 Main Street, South Barre
 978-355-6465 • 508-882-3913

With Thanks to Our Friends & Customers at Christmastime

R.J. McDonald
 Propane - Heating Oil
 71 Worcester Rd., Barre, MA • (978) 355-6649

We're certainly grateful to be wrapping up another year here with all of you!

We thank you for giving us so many reasons to celebrate, and we hope your Christmas is full of happy surprises.

Law Offices of
CRANSTON & CRANSTON P.C.
 26 Valley Road, PO Box 938, Barre
 978-355-2100

GREETINGS

Thinking it, wishing it, saying it too:
 From our door to yours,
 Merry Christmas to you!

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Holly Jolly wishes to our valued customers and friends!

Happy Holidays

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With gratitude for your support, we wish you all the best!

HUBB EQUIPMENT, INC.

31 Old Boston Turnpike, Hubbardston
 978-928-4258

Thanks for being here for us!

The best of wishes and our gratitude too, as we pause to remember good friends like you.

Merry Christmas!

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- ✓ Good Friends
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- ✓ Good Health
- ✓ Good Memories

Here's hoping your holiday season is all-good!
 Thanks so much for making our year so merry with your visits. We appreciate your friendship and your loyal patronage.

Merry Christmas!

QUABBIN PLAZA LIQUORS
 Quabbin Plaza, Barre
 978-355-6496

Happy Winter & Merry Christmas

May this season of frosty fun fill your days with laughter and happy memories!

As we pause to reflect on this year, we're both humbled and filled with gratitude for the generosity and support we've received from all of you. Thank you for believing in us.

CIRELLI REAL ESTATE
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To Our Neighbors at Christmas

May the beauty of the season bring warmth and light to your heart and home.
 Thank you for making us feel so at home here all year.

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A few warm wishes goes a long way
 To added enjoyment to the holiday
 Good to us, you've certainly been
 So we wanted to thank you for just dropping in!

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Merry Merry Merry Merry Merry
 Everything

Thank you for shopping locally!

May this holiday season deliver everything you've been wishing for and more.

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 www.waterwheelrealty.com

From Our Home to Yours,
 Merry Christmas!

Festive lights, fragrant trees, freshly baked cookies, brightly wrapped packages, and beloved family and friends to share the season... May the best of Christmastime be yours!

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A Wish for You

May the best joys of Christmas make their way to your door, and make life merrier than ever it was before.

With gratitude in our hearts, we thank you for being such kind and supportive neighbors, friends and customers.

J&J FAMILY RESTUARANT

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 978-355-2122



MERRY CHRISTMAS

How sweet it is to have friends and neighbors like all of you!

CLARK'S POOL WATER INC.

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978-355-6141

Best wishes and thanks to our dear customers and friends!



MERRY CHRISTMAS

KIP'S CHRISTMAS TREE FARM

New Braintree Center 508-867-2423



Thanks for hanging in there with us all year!

SHEAR EXPRESSIONS HAIR DESIGN

24 North Brookfield Road, Barre Plains • 978-355-4467



May feelings of peace, joy and harmony follow you everywhere you go this season! Thanks for bringing so much sparkle to our year.



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Friendship:
The Gift That Keeps On Giving

We're so grateful for each of our friends here, and for the support everyone has shown us this year.

We wish you all a blessed and happy holiday season!



WASH-N-WAGS GROOMING

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Warm & Cozy Wishes



Thanks for showing us so much kindness this year.

We really appreciate friends and customers like you, and we wish you all the best this Christmas season!

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www.CraigsBarberShopMA.com

Merry. Bright & Beautiful Wishes



At Christmastime and all year through, we hope each day will bring anew, health and happiness, laughter too, because we appreciate all of you!

We simply couldn't pick better customers and friends, and we're so grateful to be a part of this wonderful community.

Thank you, and Merry Christmas!


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Baby's First Christmas

2020




Clyde Everett Prentiss
July 14, 2020

Parents: Melissa Prentiss and Colton Prentiss, Hubbardston
Older Sister: Harper Prentiss
Grandparents: Doug Prentiss and Christine Arsenaault, Hubbardston
Kay and Dave Flick, Barre
Barbara and Dan Proffitt, Hubbardston



Barrett Charles Walsh
September 4, 2020

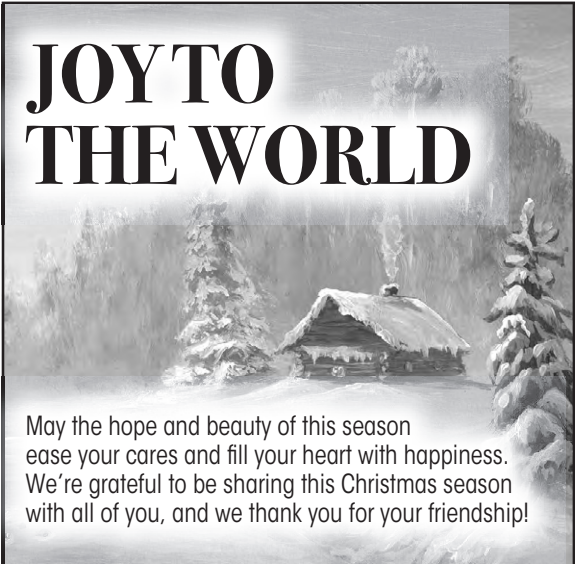
Parents: Peter and Mallory Walsh, Milton
Grandparents: Catherine Flick, Barre, Douglas Prentiss, Hubbardston
Ed and Susan Walsh, Columbia Falls, ME
Great-Grandparents: Bette Prentiss, Hubbardston
Ron and Barbara Potter, Jefferson




Shea Audrey O'Donoghue
June 11, 2020

Parents: Drew O'Donoghue and Lindsey O'Donoghue (Holmes), Eliot, ME
Grandparents: William and Catherine Holmes of Barre
Jessica O'Donoghue and William Lamprell, Eliot, ME


JOY TO THE WORLD



May the hope and beauty of this season ease your cares and fill your heart with happiness. We're grateful to be sharing this Christmas season with all of you, and we thank you for your friendship!



Changes Hair Salon



939 Worcester Road, Route 122, Barre • 978-355-6411




Greetings & Thanks

Another Christmas is on the way, and it wouldn't be complete without good friends and neighbors like all of you. Thank you for making us feel so at home here, and for your steady support through an uncertain year.


We hope your Christmas season is staffed with all of the little things — and the big things too — that make this time of year so special. Best Wishes and Happy Holidays!

PARKER HOUSE OF PIZZA

17 Pleasant Street, Downtown Gardner
(The Building with the Blue Awning)
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With Kind Thoughts at Christmas



May this season bring you many happy moments, safe and joyful reunions, and enough cheer to last all year!

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Ho-ho-hope it's merry and bright! Thank you for your kind support in 2020.

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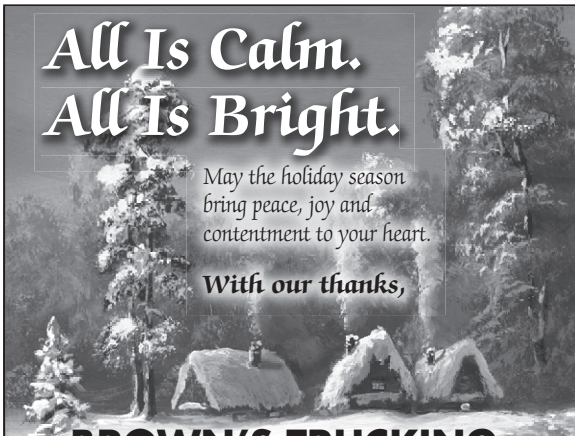
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May the holiday season bring peace, joy and contentment to your heart.

With our thanks,



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M E R R Y




May your holiday be happy and your year filled with joy! Thanks for hanging out with us this year. We really appreciate your support.

From Richie H., Shad, Chris, Jess, Carolanne, Vince, Marc, Kerry, Rick & Ryan

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Appliance & Gas Service

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Thinking of You

...and sending very merry wishes this holiday season!

Thank you for being a part of our family of customers.

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With Our Thanks at Christmas

We wish you a day of joy, a season of cheer, and health and happiness throughout the new year!

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Many Thanks & Merry Wishes

May this festive season lift your spirits with enough joy to carry you through the new year!

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May your days be caring and bright.

Have a safe and happy holiday season and a healthy, prosperous new year!

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Merry Christmas From All of Us

We appreciate all of the sweet things you've done for us this year, and we wish you the very best!

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Fire risk increases during Christmas Eve and Day

Traveling for the holidays might not be on the menu due to COVID-19, but comfort food, festive decorations, and cozy nights in are sure to lift everyone’s spirits. Unfortunately, these activities can often lead to fire, with Christmas Day and Christmas Eve as two of the top days each year for home fires caused by cooking and candles.

The National Fire Protection Association encourages everyone to keep safety in mind in order to lessen the chance that a fire will disrupt their holiday celebrations. “For a lot of people, December tops the list for the most heartwarming time of year, but it’s also a leading month for home fires

in the U.S.,” said Lorraine Carli, vice president of Outreach and Advocacy for NFPA. “Carefully decorating your home and mindfully cooking your meals can help make your holidays safer.”

More than half (51%) of the home decoration fires in December are started by candles, compared to one-third (32% in January to November.

From 2014-2018, an estimated average of 770 home structure fires per year began with decorations, excluding Christmas trees. These fires caused an average of two civilian deaths, 30 civilian injuries and \$11.1 million in direct property damage per year.

More than two of every five

(44%) decoration fires occurred because the decoration was too close to a heat source, such as a candle or hot equipment.

One-fifth (21%) of the home decoration fires occurred in December, while 10% happened in January.

Fires caused by Christmas trees are uncommon, but they are more likely to be serious when they do occur.

Between 2014-2018, U.S. fire departments responded to an average 160 home fires that started with Christmas trees per year. These fires caused an annual average of two civilian deaths, 14 civilian injuries, and \$10.3 million in direct property damage.

Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was involved in 45% of home Christmas tree fires.

In more than one-fifth (22%) of the Christmas tree fires, some type of heat source, such as a candle or equipment, was too close to the tree.

Cooking is the leading cause of reported home fires and home fire injuries and the second leading cause of home fire deaths.

An average of 470 home cooking fires were reported per day in 2018.

Thanksgiving is the peak day for home cooking fires, followed by Christmas Day and Christmas Eve.

Unattended cooking is the lead-

ing cause of home cooking fires.

Between 2014-2018 U.S. fire departments responded to an annual average of 7,610 home structure fires caused by candles. These fires caused an average 81 civilian fire deaths, 677 civilian fire injuries, and \$278 million in direct property damage annually.

On average, 21 home candle fires were reported each day.

Three of every five (60%) candle fires started when something that could burn, such as furniture, mattresses or bedding, curtains or decorations, was too close to the candle.

Candle fires peak in December. January ranked second.

Nearly three times as many fires

started by candles were reported on Christmas (an average of 58 Christmas fires) as the daily average.

Find a wide variety of tips and resources surrounding holiday fire safety on the NFPA Winter Holidays page. For more releases and other announcements about NFPA initiatives, research and resources, people may visit the this NFPA press room.

Founded in 1896, NFPA is a global self-funded nonprofit organization devoted to eliminating death, injury, property and economic loss due to fire, electrical and related hazards. viewed online for free at www.nfpa.org/freeaccess.

OSV holds virtual gingerbread house contest

STURBRIDGE – Old Sturbridge Village’s annual Gingerbread House Contest is a popular feature of the holiday season at Old Sturbridge Village during their Christmas by Candlelight program. Due to spatial and safety concerns, it is not possible to have the 2020 contest in the same format as previous years. Instead the village invited visitors, friends and fans, near and far, to enter virtually.

Old Sturbridge Village has received several dozen spectacular entries from all over the country. Contestants were asked to submit photos of their entries in one of four categories, including adult non-professional, adult professional, youth and family. Prizes will be awarded in each category to the top entry. Visitors are able to view the entries on a monitor in the Village’s Visitor Center as well as on their website and vote for “Best in Show.”

“Our annual holiday event is still a very festive recreation of the past and we’ve kept as many of the popular elements as possible and added new ones,” said director of public Eevents, Jim O’Brien. “With innovation and creative thinking we were

able to keep the beloved tradition of the Gingerbread House Contest alive.”

All are welcome to vote on their favorite entry at www.osv.org through Dec. 30. The winners will be announced at the conclusion of Christmas by Candlelight 2020. Tickets are still available for Christmas by Candlelight, but limited due to capacity limits and can be purchased on Old Sturbridge Village’s website.

Old Sturbridge Village, first opened to the public in 1946, is one of the country’s oldest and largest living history museums, celebrating life in early New England from 1790-1840. It is the largest living history museum in the Northeast. Each year, more than 250,000 visitors interact with costumed historians, experience up-close demonstrations of early American trades, and meet heritage breed farm animals. Situated on 200 scenic acres, the Village is a collection of more than 40 historic buildings including homes, meetinghouses, trade shops, working farms, restaurants, shops and three water-powered mills.

AAA offers tips for securing Christmas tree in vehicle

This year, millions of Americans will flock to tree lots across the country in search of the perfect Christmas tree. While finding just the right one may seem like the hard part getting it home safely is where the real challenge begins.

Just like moving furniture, appliances or other large objects, transporting a tree is no different. If not properly secured, a tree can cause vehicle damage such as scratched paint, torn door seals or distort window frames. Even worse, it could fly off or out of the vehicle and become a danger to other drivers. In fact, a 2019 survey from AAA found that 44% of Americans, who planned to purchase a real Christmas tree that year would use unsafe methods when transporting it home such as not using the roof rack or placing it in the bed of a pickup truck unsecured.

Losing a Christmas tree on the drive home would no doubt put a damper on the holiday season. But, more importantly, a tree that comes loose from

a vehicle could also cause an accident. Previous research from AAA found that road debris caused more than 200,000 crashes during a four-year period, resulting in approximately 39,000 injuries and 500 deaths. The roads can be treacherous enough during the holiday season with increased congestion and winter weather conditions without the addition of flying Christmas trees. Luckily with a little preparation, the right tools and the right vehicle transporting a Christmas tree is easy with these tips from AAA:

Do not visit a tree lot if you or anyone from your family has tested positive for COVID-19 or are experiencing COVID-related symptoms.

Call the lot ahead of time and ask about their policies for visiting. It is possible they may have reduced operating hours or are limiting the amount of people who can visit the lot at one time. It is also a good idea to ask when they are slow and plan to visit then, when crowds may be smaller.

Although most lots are located outside, it is recommended to wear a face covering and practice social distancing. Bring hand sanitizer and keep it nearby while shopping.

Make sure to bring strong rope or nylon ratchet straps, an old blanket, gloves and of course the right vehicle. One with a roof rack is ideal, but a pickup truck, SUV, van or minivan can work just as well.

Once you’ve found the perfect tree, have the lot wrap it in netting before loading it. Loose branches can also be secured with rope or twine to help protect the tree from damage.

Prior to loading the tree, cover the roof with an old blanket to prevent scratches to the paint and protect the car from any damage.

Place the tree on the roof rack or in the bed of the truck with the trunk facing the front of the car. If the vehicle does not have a roof rack and is a SUV, CUV, van or minivan place the tree inside. If not, rent or borrow a pickup truck, a vehicle with a

roof rack or one that is large enough to accommodate the tree inside.

Secure the tree at its bottom, center and top using strong rope or nylon ratchet straps. Avoid using the twine offered by many tree lots. Use fixed vehicle tie-down points and loop the rope or strap around the tree trunk above a branch to prevent any side-to-side or front-to-rear movement.

Once tied down, give the tree several strong tugs from various angles to make sure it is secured in place and will not come loose.

Drive slowly and take back roads if possible. Higher speeds can create significant airflow that can damage your tree or challenge even the best tie-down methods.

AAA Northeast is a not-for-profit auto club with 64 offices in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, New Hampshire and New York, providing more than 5.7 million local AAA members with travel, insurance, finance and auto-related services.

RACING, continued from page 9

Spring Dash weekend. Post-time for this event is 2 p.m., with the NHSTRA Modifieds, NELCAR Legends and more also on the card. A second stop at “Mad Dog” is slated for Saturday, September 4 as part of Labor Day weekend at the Winchester, New Hampshire, oval.

The series heads to Bobby Webber’s Star Speedway for the first of two stops on Saturday night, May 8, before a return to the Star Classic weekend on Friday, September 17 comes in the thick of the championship battle. Last year, Derek Griffith and Joey Pole put together one of the best races in series history as part of the Classic at Star, which has become a staple track for the series.

Claremont Motorsports Park hosts their first of three dates on Memorial Day weekend as a Sunday evening special, May 30. Following the \$10,000 to win Newport Chevrolet 150 in July, an event won by Derek Griffith

last year, the champion will be crowned at Claremont for the first time on October 16 as part of the track’s Fall Challenge weekend.

Beech Ridge Motor Speedway in Maine will hold two Granite State events for the first time in track history -- with stops set for June 12 and August 14. Last year, the series hosted more than 30 cars as a mix of regulars and track favorites competed for glory in the inaugural stop at Beech Ridge -- a race won by Wyatt Alexander.

“We had so much success with our first appearance at Beech Ridge last year, the car count was fantastic and Andy and the staff there welcomed us and our teams for a great event,” Parks said. “Going there twice should give us much of the same we saw in 2020.”

Additional summer events include the annual stop at Riverside Speedway in Groveton, New Hampshire, on June 19 and the Sunday afternoon spectacular at Hudson Speedway on Sunday, July 11. Granite State teams will also stop at Lee USA Speedway

twice -- both at some of the track’s most historic race weekends. The first comes on Friday, July 2, celebrating Independence Day -- and the second will be on Sunday, October 3 as part of the season-ending Octoberfest.

There is one event that remains outstanding on the series schedule -- dated for Saturday, July 24 -- which is on track to be announced soon. Series officials are working on the final details surrounding that event and will announce once available.

The Granite State Pro Stock Series will have further updates surrounding the 2021 season when available. For more information, visit gspss.net and follow the series on social media.

2021 GRANITE STATE PRO STOCK SERIES SCHEDULE:

April 24 -- Stafford Motor Speedway -- Stafford, Conn. -- 75 laps

May 2 -- Monadnock Speedway -- Winchester, N.H. -- 100 laps

May 8 -- Star Speedway --

Epping, N.H. -- 100 laps

May 30 -- Claremont Speedway -- Claremont, N.H. -- 100 laps

June 12 -- Beech Ridge Motor Speedway -- Scarborough, Maine -- 150 laps

June 19 -- Riverside Speedway -- Groveton, N.H. -- 150 laps

July 2 -- Lee USA Speedway -- Lee, N.H. -- 100 laps

July 11 -- Hudson International Speedway -- Hudson, N.H. -- 100 laps

July 24 -- TBA

July 31 -- \$10k to Win -- Claremont Motorsports Park -- Claremont, N.H. -- 100 laps

August 14 -- Beech Ridge Motor Speedway -- Scarborough, Maine -- 150 laps

September 4 -- Monadnock Speedway -- Winchester, N.H. -- 100 laps

September 17 -- Star Speedway -- Epping, N.H. -- 100 laps

October 3 -- Lee USA Speedway -- Lee, N.H. -- 100 laps

October 16 -- Claremont Motorsports Park -- Claremont, N.H. -- 100 laps

T-BIRDS, continued from page 9

strong commitment to our community, and we can’t wait to get back to the arena to cheer them on when it’s safe to do so.”

The virtual and drive-thru version of the Teddy Bear Toss kicked off on #GivingTuesday, the annual global movement that encourages people to do good and support nonprofits, encouraging fans that couldn’t physically attend the event to donate to the Thunderbirds’ Foundation and sponsor a bear. Over 250 bears were sponsored by local and national supporters of the Teddy Bear Toss through donations to the Thunderbirds’ Foundation, including a significant number donated by Balise Auto Group.

“We are amazed and grateful at the outpouring of support for the Drive-Thru Teddy Bear Toss” said Thunderbirds President Nathan Costa. “Teddy Bear Toss is a staple event for the Thunderbirds, and our fans came out in full sup-

port. We can’t thank our fans, partners, and those that donated to our Foundation enough to be able to bring smiles to children at this time of year.”

The Thunderbirds extend a special thank you to all of their partners that stepped up and were able to make this event a reality, including: Teddy Bear Pools & Spas, Balise Auto Group, Western Mass News, the Springfield Business Improvement District & downtown Visitor’s Center, New Valley Bank & Trust and Dunkin’. The Thunderbirds also would like to thank their teddy bear delivery partner, BMW of West Springfield.

The Thunderbirds Teddy Bear Toss was established in 2016, whereby the Thunderbirds’ first goal in the annual Teddy Bear Toss game results in a celebration of bears being thrown onto the ice. Since starting the tradition four seasons ago, the Thunderbirds have contributed more than 10,000 bears to local Springfield charities.

A little wish for big joy at the holidays!

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As we ring in the holidays, we're filled with gratitude for so many blessings, including the friendship and support of good folks like you. Thank you, and Merry Christmas!

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Public Safety

Barre Police Log

<p>Sunday, Dec. 13</p> <p>5:17 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Pleasant Street – Citation Issued</p> <p>7:44 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Root Road – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>7:50 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Wauwinet Road – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>8:24 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Mechanic Street – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>Monday, Dec. 14</p> <p>4:11 p.m. Disturbance, Person(s) Cedar Street – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>9:46 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Old Petersham Road – Ambulance Signed Refusal</p> <p>Tuesday, Dec. 15</p> <p>1:28 p.m. Motor Vehicle Accident</p>	<p>Worcester Road – Report Filed</p> <p>9:11 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Summer Street – No Transport Required</p> <p>Wednesday, Dec. 16</p> <p>11:37 a.m. Fire, Chimney Almon Thrasher Road – Fire Extinguished</p> <p>7:14 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Pleasant Street – Ambulance Signed Refusal</p> <p>9:12 p.m. Larceny Old Coldbrook Road – Officer Advised</p> <p>Thursday, Dec. 17</p> <p>9:17 a.m. Property Damage Oakham Road – Criminal Complaint</p> <p>Summons: Jackson T. Jurgiel, 22, Auburn</p> <p>Leave Scene of Property Damage</p> <p>11:33 a.m. Property Damage Union</p>	<p>Street – Officer Spoke to Party</p> <p>Friday, Dec. 18</p> <p>9:04 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Wheelwright Road – Criminal Complaint</p> <p>Summons: Liam H. Watson, 19, Wheelwright</p> <p>License Suspended, Operate Motor Vehicle With</p> <p>Saturday, Dec. 19</p> <p>12:16 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop West Street – Citation Issued</p> <p>SOUTH BARRE</p> <p>Monday, Dec. 14</p> <p>5:09 p.m. Fraud South Street – Officer Spoke to Party</p>
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Oakham Police Log

<p>Sunday, Dec. 13</p> <p>1:35 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Old Turnpike Road – Citation Issued</p> <p>4:56 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop North Brookfield Road – Citation Issued</p> <p>5:17 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop North Brookfield Road – Citation Issued</p> <p>Tuesday, Dec. 15</p> <p>6:26 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Old Turnpike Road – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>Wednesday, Dec. 16</p> <p>3:34 p.m. Assault Spencer Road –</p>	<p>Officer Advised</p> <p>Thursday, Dec. 17</p> <p>9:51 a.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Scott Road – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>Friday, Dec. 18</p> <p>3:35 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Flint Road – Services Rendered</p> <p>4:03 p.m. Fraud Crawford Road – Information Taken</p> <p>5:22 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Worcester Road – Citation Issued</p> <p>6:49 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Old Turnpike Road – Written Warning</p>	<p>8:36 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Worcester Road – Citation Issued</p> <p>11:24 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Worcester Road – Citation Issued</p> <p>Saturday, Dec. 19</p> <p>10:49 a.m. Vandalism Bechan Road – Referred to Other Agency</p> <p>11:27 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop North Brookfield Road – Citation Issued</p> <p>6:22 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop North Brookfield Road – Citation Issued</p> <p>9:22 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Worcester Road – Citation Issued</p>
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Hubbardston Police Log

<p>Monday, Dec. 14</p> <p>6:33 a.m. Motor Vehicle Accident Barre Road – No Transport Required</p> <p>12:20 p.m. Fraud Mt. Jefferson Road – Services Rendered</p> <p>4:49 p.m. Fraud Barre Road – Officer Spoke to Party</p>	<p>Tuesday, Dec. 15</p> <p>10:26 p.m. Property Damage Worcester Road – Report Filed</p> <p>Wednesday, Dec. 16</p> <p>4:23 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Barre Road Cut-Off Road – Transported to Hospital</p>	<p>4:53 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Old Princeton Cutoff Road – Ambulance Signed Refusal</p> <p>Thursday, Dec. 17</p> <p>3:01 p.m. Motor Vehicle Accident Worcester Road – Vehicle Towed</p>
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3

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Rutland Police Log

<p>Sunday, Dec. 13</p> <p>6:06 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop East County Road – Written Warning</p> <p>10:34 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Miles Road – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>Monday, Dec. 14</p> <p>1:43 a.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Haven Hill Road – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>Tuesday, Dec. 15</p> <p>7:47 a.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Main Street – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>12:47 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Intervale Road – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>1:14 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop East County Road – Criminal Complaint</p> <p>Summons: Milton A. Garcia-Fuentes, 32, Framingham</p> <p>License Suspended, Operate Motor Vehicle With</p> <p>3:13 p.m. Fraud Nates Way – Officer Advised</p> <p>3:29 p.m. Fraud Maple Avenue – Report Filed</p> <p>6:26 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Old Turnpike Road – Transported to Hospital</p>	<p>Wednesday, Dec. 16</p> <p>8:42 a.m. Fraud Richards Avenue – Officer Spoke to Party</p> <p>8:46 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Main Street – Citation Issued</p> <p>9:02 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Pleasantdale Road – Citation Issued</p> <p>9:32 a.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Pleasantdale Road – Arrest(s) Made</p> <p>Arrest: Andrius Budriunas, 41, Cheshire, CT</p> <p>License Suspended, Operate Motor Vehicle With; Seat Belt, Fail Wear; Speeding Rate of Speed Greater Than was Reasonable and Proper c90 \$17</p> <p>10:31 a.m. Fraud East County Road – Officer Spoke to Party</p> <p>12:28 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Maple Avenue – Citation Issued</p> <p>Thursday, Dec. 17</p> <p>9:51 a.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Scott Road – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>3:18 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Grizzly Drive – No Transport Required</p> <p>Friday, Dec. 18</p> <p>11:45 a.m. Motor Vehicle Accident Main Street – Negative Contact</p> <p>3:35 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Flint Road – Services Rendered</p>	<p>3:42 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Main Street – Written Warning</p> <p>3:48 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Main Street – Vehicle Towed</p> <p>Summons: Alexander J. Cellucci, 28, Worcester</p> <p>License Suspended, Operate Motor Vehicle With</p> <p>4:31 p.m. Fire, Medical Emergency Miles Road – Transported to Hospital</p> <p>5:13 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop East County Road – Arrest(s) Made</p> <p>Arrest: Craig P. Chiarenza, 50, Gardner</p> <p>License Revoked as HTO, Operate Motor Vehicle With (Criminal); Warrant; Identify Self, Motor Vehicle Operator Refuse; Number Plate Violation</p> <p>Summons: Theresa S. Clevinger, 51, Lancaster, SC</p> <p>Unlicensed/Suspended Operation of Motor Vehicle, Permit</p> <p>11:55 p.m. Motor Vehicle Stop Barre Paxton Road – Written Warning</p> <p>Saturday, Dec. 19</p> <p>2:35 p.m. Fire, Gas Leak/Problem/ Odor Sanders Road – Investigated</p>
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MADD launches 2020 Tie One On for Safety campaign

BOSTON – Mothers Against Drunk Driving® Massachusetts, in partnership with Fundación MAPFRE kicked off a safe 2020 holiday season. Drivers can show their commitment to keeping themselves and their communities safe by designating a non-drinking driver and displaying a MADD Tie One On for Safety red ribbon or magnetic decal on their vehicles during this holiday season.

“Whether you’re traveling or hosting a small socially distanced group, always remember your designated driver,” said Mary Kate DePamphilis, MADD Massachusetts. “Everyone can help keep our holiday season joyous by planning ahead when celebrations include alcohol. Take personal responsibility for your travel by choosing a non-drinking, unimpaired driver and remember to include non-alcoholic options for the designated drivers, who are guests in your home.”

The holidays are among the most dangerous times on our nation’s roadways, with more people traveling, an increased number of events where alcohol is served and a surge in drunk driving. Between 6 p.m. Thanksgiving Eve through New Year’s Eve in 2018, there were 1,068 lives lost to drunk driving across the country, accounting for 29 percent of all traffic deaths, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

In addition, a new study by NHTSA shows an alarming increase in the presence of alcohol and other

drugs among traffic crash victims during the COVID-19 pandemic. From March 17 to July 18, 64.7% of drivers tested positive for at least one active drug including alcohol, compared to 50.8% from Sept. 10, 2019 to March 16. Alcohol presence was found in 28.3% of drivers involved in crashes, up from 21.8% before the pandemic. Other drugs are also a concern: 32.7% of drivers tested positive for active THC and opioid presence among drivers almost doubled from 7.5% to 13.9%.

With so many options today such as Uber and Lyft, taxis and public transportation, there is no excuse to drive while impaired by alcohol or other drugs.

Last year, more than 120 people were killed in impaired driving crashes in Massachusetts alone. That doesn’t include the thousands, who were injured severely.

Since 1986, MADD has helped to make the “designated driver” a household name through its longest-running annual public awareness campaign, Tie One On for Safety. This red ribbon campaign is held annually during November and December. December is also National Impaired Driving Prevention Month, a designation proclaimed by every U.S. president since 1981.

MADD thanks all law enforcement personnel, who will be working harder than ever this holiday season to protect the public from drunk driving through increased patrols and Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over enforcement efforts.

Baystate Health receives first shipment of Pfizer vaccine

SPRINGFIELD —The first COVID vaccine to receive Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) by the FDA is currently being shipped to health systems and hospitals around the country.

Baystate Health in its initial shipment of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine received a very limited number of vaccine doses, 1,950, which were immediately placed in ultra-cold storage until vaccinations begin on Wednesday.

The vaccine will be distributed to select categories of clinically facing team members based on their relative risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the workplace. System employees first offered the vaccine will be those at highest relative risk based on: the

community prevalence, local transmission rates, type of work unit and patient volumes in distinct locations.

Baystate Health expects to receive more doses of the Pfizer vaccine and potentially others (the Moderna vaccine is expected to receive Emergency Authorization Use later this week) over the next several weeks and plans to expand vaccination to additional groups of health care workers at that time.

As already noted above, those who will receive the vaccine first as part of “Phase One” are front-line health care workers and long-term care staff and residents. They will be followed by police, firefighters and emergency medical workers, home-based health work-

ers and other “non-COVID facing” health workers, according to the state’s distribution plan. As for “Phase Two” priority groups, it will include residents with two or more chronic illnesses, essential workers such as teachers, transit employees and food, sanitation, public works and public health workers, according to the state’s priority list. After that will come adults, who are 65 and over and individuals with one co-morbidity making them at higher risk for COVID-19. The vaccine will be available to the general public beginning in April as part of “Phase Three.”

For more information about Baystate Health, people may visit baystatehealth.org.

BBB warns of fake deals on gaming consoles

With many people shopping for gifts on a budget this holiday season, scammers are taking advantage of the demand for pricey gaming consoles by promoting fake deals on Nintendo Switch, PlayStation 4 PRO and the new PlayStation 5. People should be sure to use caution when buying a console online.

How the Scam Works

Shoppers find a popular gaming console for sale online at a reduced price. Hoping to save some money, shopper research the seller’s website and find a few positive reviews. Convinced, the shoppers make their purchase via PayPal or another online payment method. They receive an email confirmation with shipping information and a tracking number.

If they receive a package at all from the company, it isn’t a gaming console instead, it is a valueless phone cover or similar small object. Since they technically received a shipment, they will be unable to contest the purchase with the third-party, who processed the payment.

Attempts to contact the company are useless. No one answers phone calls or emails. One consumer, who never received any package reported to BBB.org/ScamTracker: “I attempted to reach out to the email address on their website, however I received an email informing me that it was not a valid email address. I then attempted to call the phone number listed on the website, [which it gave me] an automatic message informing me that the number was not valid.”

How to Avoid Online Purchase Scams

Research the company the buyer plans to purchase from thoroughly. It’s best to purchase items from sellers they already know and trust, but if they decide to purchase from an unfamiliar online store, do their homework first. Read as many customer reviews as they can find, look up the business on org and do an online search

with the company’s name followed by the word “scam” to see if they find any complaints. Make sure the company has legitimate customer service contact information, not just a form they have to fill out and hope for a response and clear return and refund policies as well.

Avoid impulse buying.

Scammers like to draw people in with “flash sales” and “limited time offers” in hopes they will hand over their money on impulse. Resist the urge.

Don’t believe prices that are too good to be true. Before people start shopping, find out the price of the gaming console at a major retailer. They can check prices online to get a general idea of what the console is selling for. Keep that price in mind as they shop and be wary of sellers, who offer the product at a steeply discounted price. They could end up spending money on a defective or counterfeit product or no product at all.

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